

Angels
of
Wrath 4
SERIES

Fire

Paulina Ian-Kane

five

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ANGELS OF WRATH BOOK 4

PAULINA IAN-KANE



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author's note

If anyone finds errors in my work, grammatical or otherwise, please don't post it in your reviews but reach out to me. I will be forever grateful for that.

hello@paulinaiankanebooks.com

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read before starting the book, please.

Hello my dear readers,

You're about to dive into my crazy story, buckle up!

Just remember that Lori uses British English at times (his gran who raised him was from Manchester, UK) but he was born and raised in the US, so his way of speaking is somehow peculiar.

Also, Gabe has multiplicity. I based the description of this condition on someone very close to me, on their personal experience, and also mine, as an outside witness. They were my very own *experts* on the subject. Please be gentle when reviewing about it.

Cheers,

Paulina

Here are some clarifications about DID, Multiplicity and DDnos,

DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder), people with this condition have two or more separate identities. These personalities control a person's behavior at different times, or co-front and are in charge together at the same time on different levels. Each identity has its own personal history, traits, likes, and dislikes.

A very close person to me has this condition, and they've been so very kind to open up to me about it. They talked to me about multiplicity, also called plurality, which is an [online subculture](#) of people identifying as having or using multiple [personalities](#), or as having multiple people occupying one mind and body.

“While DID is felt as a disorder diagnosed by a psychiatrist, multiplicity is more affirming than distressing.”

DID could be used as a shorthand term for the concept of multiplicity. DID describes very high levels of dissociation in the areas of both identity and memory. It is possible to experience multiplicity without memory loss—in fact, this is sometimes part of the goal of therapy for people who have DID—and people with that experience may instead be given the diagnosis of Dissociative Disorder, not otherwise specified (DDnos). People with multiplicity issues may also be diagnosed as schizophrenic, psychotic, or with other conditions, or not given any diagnosis or framework to make sense of their experiences.

In this book, one of the MCs is based on my friend’s experience with this condition—which because it’s based on multiple dissimilar identities, is quite unique and different from anyone else’s—and my outsider perception of it, since I’ve known my friend for many years now.

There is a high level of stigma and freak factor around multiplicity that can cause a lot of problems for people who experience DID or multiplicity, and can make it very difficult to think clearly about. If you’re trying to work this out, it can be tough. Hang in there and be nice to yourself.

My friend has found other lovely people experiencing the same condition in this community, feel free to check it out:

<https://di.org.au>

Terms related to DID and Multiplicity

Headmates, Alters, and Core Identity: The “core” identity is the primary personality. “Alters” or “Headmates” are the alternate personalities or individuals.

Switch or take over: When an alter comes forward and operates the body with complete control, pushing other identities out.

Co-consciousness: A kind of awareness. It happens when, although there's a switch, the other identities are still aware of what is happening, or they are filled in by the alter(s) on what has happened.

Co-fronting: A specific type of co-consciousness in which two or more alters are in control at the same time. This can mean anything from multiple alters that can use the mouth to when one alter controls the left arm and one alter controls the right arm, or anything in between.

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triggers

This story contains dark themes and potential triggers, including but not limited to:

rough sex and scenes that may contain dubious usage of proper lubricants, mention of date rape drugs, one MC is dosed with the drug, dub-con scene with sex under the influence (between MCs) in a voyeur room at a sex club, sexsomnia (engaging in sexual activity while asleep between MCs), discussion and imagery regarding euthanasia, talking about experimentation and torture of children, explicit language, one secondary character goes into a coma, suspicion of poisoning.

One MC has multiplicity and talks about his past DID (dissociative identity disorder).

There is torture (of very bad people) with bloody, gory, disturbing (for some) scenes throughout the book. There's a small reference to homophobia.

Please keep these potential triggers in mind, as your mental health is of the utmost importance.

main and recurring characters:

THE SEVEN FOSTER BROTHERS NAMED AFTER THE ANGELS OF WRATH

One, Michael “Mike” Bear-Stone

Two, Raphael “Raph” Bear-Stone

Six, Raguel “Rague” Carver

Three, Ramiel “Rami” Masters

Five, Gabriel “Gabe”/Bezaliel “Bez” Reed

Uriel “Uri” Mahoe

Sariel “Sari” Bear-Stone

Mothers:

Doc. Megan Katherine Bear

Agent Linda Stone

Others:

Oliver “Ollie” Carver, Rague’s husband

Sully Carver, Ollie's brother

Hunter, Rami's boyfriend

Ren, one of the Triplets living with Rami and Hunter

Dare, one of the Triplets living with Rami and Hunter

Ash, one of the Triplets living with Rami and Hunter

Clover, thief, works with the brothers

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the code

1. Kids and pets always have to be protected
2. Be one hundred percent sure the donor deserves it
3. No revenge kills alone
4. Ask your bros for help
5. Let your anchor keep you grounded (Michael's)
6. Sex is the best de-stress there is...and cake (Ollie's)
7. Share every bloody part (Hunter's)
8. Never keep evidence that can link you to a donor...unless it's pricy lingerie (Rami's)

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*Sometimes revenge doesn't have to be served cold. Take a page from Lori
and use a glittery purple dick-in-the-box.*

*"Thank you, my dear, for letting me look inside your unique, extraordinary
mind."*

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prologue



TWENTY-ONE YEARS AGO

Project: Blood Assassin

Subject: Five

Day: 326

Time: 20:25

The solitary confinement in the Hole and the sleep deprivation don't seem to bother Subject Five anymore. Constant bright lights and loud noises still push the Subject to react, such as videos of violence against women. The goal of this project is to take Five's weaknesses away, and the urge to protect women is a vulnerability we must suppress.

Five's mood swings are getting more severe. The Subject turns from aggressive and crass, to emotionless and uncooperative. The Subject's volatility and the radical change in personality hint to multiple identities. The belligerent alter comes out during the daily psychological trials we are inflicting on Five. We must increase those to trigger the switch and work on the alter, who's more prone to violence. Making the alter the dominant personality would help our sessions immensely.

Mithridatism isn't building up the immunity to biological toxins in the Subject as fast as we hoped. The rapidity with which the Subject metabolizes drugs is one of the reasons we chose Five for the project, but the Subject is still vulnerable to toxins.

Today, we increased Five's injection to 1 ng of Botulinum. The Subject's pain level seemed to be as high as usual, Five's screams, convulsive jolting, and uncontrollable lurching forced us to secure him to the bed to avoid him tearing the ECG machine's tubes again. After thirty seconds—ten more than last time—the Subject's heart slowed dangerously until it stopped. We used a defibrillator to revive him.

Five's immune system is learning to deal with the toxins, but at this rate, the Subject will be dead before we achieve concrete results. Reducing the toxin's doses will set us back months, and if Five flatlines, we'll have to start all over again with a new subject.

Creating an assassin immune to biological toxins and drugs is an opportunity we can't ignore.

one

GABRIEL/BEZALIEL



PRESENT DAY

“You’re fired.” My tone is final as I hold down the speaker button on the intercom on my desk. The temp PA on the other end remains silent. I look through the glass wall along one side of my office at Millennium Park, filled with hundreds of people at this time in the afternoon, and further down at the blue waters of Lake Michigan.

“Go see Evelyn in the HR office. I want your desk empty in the next five minutes.” I release the button and turn my eyes to my phone to see if I can fix the disaster the temporary assistant made. Three days ago, I asked him to call the escort agency I normally use when I need a plus-one to an event, and he *couldn’t*. Which is unacceptable.

Now the agency has no one available since the fundraising dinner is in less than a week. If I don’t bring someone, most of the high-society mothers present at this event will try to push their snobbish daughters on me. It’s incredible how relentless they are when in the presence of a rich bachelor. Hence the need of a plus-one to make them back down.

My irregular schedule and long hours in the office could make it hard, but wouldn’t really prevent me from having a personal life. It’s just that I don’t want one, not to mention how dangerous it would be, given my...lifestyle.

Escorts are the right solution for me. They do what I say and be what I want them to be for a few hours. No complications.

Offering the agency double their fee could do the trick. I leave a voicemail since nobody is picking up, and my next call is to the HR office to find a new assistant.

My regular, super-efficient PA went on maternity leave two weeks ago, leaving me in chaos. The guy she found as a temporary replacement had an accident which prevented him from coming to work for me. This is the third assistant I've fired since she left.

I scratch my cheek, down my short stubble, and wiggle in my chair, trying to shake away the uneasiness spreading through my body. It will go away after tonight.

"Evelyn," I address the HR manager on the line. "My temporary assistant is coming your way. See what you can do while you find me a new one."

Before she can reply, the door to my office opens, and Bart Dorridge, an associate working for my firm, walks in. His rigid strides and the angry expression on his long face give me a clear hint of what this is about.

"Evelyn, I'll call you back," I say into the phone before hanging up.

"You fired my brother?" he barks, stopping in front of my desk. His clothes are wrinkled, hair mussed. I can see the leather carry-on he dropped on one of the chairs outside my office through the open door. He just came back from his work trip and found out about his brother's contract termination.

I wish you terminated him with one of your knives, Bez growls.

The angry associate in front of me can't hear Bez, the alternate personality I share a body with. We co-front, which means that we are both in control at the same time to varying degrees. Even though at work I tend to lead since law is my area of expertise.

I'm slightly tempted by Bez's suggestion, still I force the thought away. The family code forbids it.

“You already know the answer to that question.” I don’t like to waste my time, even less to useless conversations.

“You believed a lying, easy, ladder climber over my brother? Frederick worked for you for three years.” He lifts three fingers in the air. “How many cases did he win for this firm? How many clients did he bring in? He made you rich.”

Tedious.

Boring motherfucker, Bez feels the need to add. *Drown him out with some Queen of the Storange.*

Now is not the time for your rock music, I tell him.

“I was already rich, and everything Frederick did was for himself.” I turn my eyes to my cell phone again and start answering an associate’s text.

Through my peripheral vision, I see Bart lower his fists to my desk, his purple tie falling on the wooden, shiny top while his body leans toward me in what he must think is an intimidating move.

Bez doesn’t like the pathetic power move. He hisses, and he’s the one slightly curling my left hand around the chair’s armrest.

He’s what psychiatrists call the protector, while I’m the core identity. He takes charge in the event of real or perceived danger, physical or emotional. But it rarely happens these days. Bart Dorridge’s bullying, aggressive act is only that: an act. He’s all bark and no bite. He’s good at making the opposition take deals. His cases rarely end up in court because if they do, he loses.

“That lying bastard is still working for you, though!” he hisses.

Lori is many things, snarky, arrogant, over-confident, but not a liar. When I lift my eyes to Bart’s, my blank expression doesn’t show any sign of emotion. “Not for me. For the firm.”

Bart starts ranting, and my bored mind switches to Lori. He’s a paralegal, a very good one, I was told. He used to work for Bart’s brother, but after

rightfully smashing Fredrick's face against a desk, I moved him to a group of new associates.

Lori is my brother-in-law's best friend and a magnet for trouble. And he has hated my guts from the very first time his chestnut brown eyes fell on me.

Rague has asked me more than once why I hired him since Lori never hides his dislike for me. My brother knows very well I don't do anything out of the goodness of my heart. I always have an agenda. I'm a lawyer. I'm part of a conniving, bloodthirsty bunch. Manipulating and plotting is an everyday occurrence for me.

At first, I hired Lori because I didn't trust him. He came into our lives when Rague met his husband, Ollie. And Ollie accepted quite easily what my family does because, well, he loves Rague. But Lori? He isn't a bloodthirsty psychopath like Raph or a torture-loving sociopath like Uri—my other two brothers—still, he's eager to punish evil, just like we do. Why?

"...so why didn't you fire him? You're not afraid of a lawsuit; you can crush him in court if he sues. Unless...are you fucking him?"

Mmm, Bez's noncommittal hum echoes in my head, bringing me back into the conversation.

Bart's face has turned red, his lips have taken on a disgusted twist, and his little eyes have narrowed in on me. Does his homophobic brain know that his brother likes to grope men, like he did to Lori?

I sigh as I place my phone into my gray waistcoat pocket and then relax back into my leather chair. "You couldn't be more irrelevant. Why are you here wasting my time?"

"I want to know why you're protecting a-a nobody...a paralegal! And why did you force Frederick to sign a document that prevents him from suing the lying bastard? He broke his nose for fuck's sake!"

His impulsiveness and directness make him an average lawyer—even less than average. His persistence is as commendable as it is vexing. Maybe I should fire him as well.

Right now, I could call security and have him removed.

Or stab him in the heart with the combat knife you placed this morning in the extra pocket Vincenzo sewed for you in the inside of your suit jacket, Bez suggests.

I won't do either. Fear is always the fastest weapon to make cowards retreat, and I have work to do.

"I didn't force him. He signed because this wasn't your brother's first time harassing one of his staff." Bart's eyes widen as I keep talking. His demeanor radically changes in front of my eyes. "I now know about all the people he molested and then bribed, threatened, or coerced into silence. I talked to every single one of them." And sent them to an attorney working for another law firm, who took their case and will sue the ass off Frederick Dorridge. Except Lori. He already had his revenge on the guy's face.

"That's...impossible. He... What...?" He stumbles over his words as he takes a few steps back, looking shocked and maybe slightly scared. Either by the fact that his brother is a disgusting pig or that his boss knows about it and is now on to him. Because I am. Bart's background looked clean...too clean for my liking, just like Fredrick's before I let my brother, Rami, dig deeper.

"If I find out that you were aware of your brother's *wrongdoings*, your termination will be immediate, and I won't stop there."

He opens his mouth, but the cold stare I usually reserve for my donors shushes him. Bez's growl comes out of my lips, and I fill my voice with ice. "Now get out of my office and don't try anything, Bart. Remember, I can easily crush you." *And not only in court.*

He looks down at the wooden floor, I can clearly see on his face how he's frantically trying to find the best way to proceed. After a couple of seconds, he gives me a stiff nod and leaves my office, closing the door a little too vigorously behind him.

Fear of losing his job, his credibility, and his position worked like a charm. Also of getting caught?

Maybe he is eligible to become a donor—that's what my brothers and I call the people we kill. But they have to be evil to receive such an honor, and we

need substantial proof, as the code we follow requires. It's a family side business—technically a foster family side business. Still, we think of ourselves as brothers since we made a promise in blood many years ago to always be there for each other. The long, old scar on my palm feels uneven under my thumb.

The fate we suffered brought us together, and what we do now keeps us close. We were kidnapped when we were kids and tortured by two sadistic scientists, who were trying to turn us into emotionless assassins. Officially, the military project was unsanctioned. Unofficially, the two bastards who funded it are rotting seven feet underground.

We were chosen primarily because of our psychotic traits—traits that disappeared with time in most of us—but also for our high IQs and, in my case, my blood. When our foster mothers, Meg and Linda—one a renown forensic psychiatrist and the other a secret agent—found us, we were already fucked up in one way or another. Our bodies might have healed, but after years of torture, our minds have found different ways to cope. And that's the general reason behind the family side business. We kill rapists, killers, abusers—the touchables. Where the law fails or justice turns a blind eye, we thrive.

We aren't heroes or villains, bad guys or good guys. We are simply essential to restore a natural balance.

Each one of us has a different motive. Raph loves the sight of blood, Rague needs to feed the anger inside of him, Rami thinks it's our destiny. Me? I kill to keep myself in check. Unaliving evil stops the fastidious itch rushing up and down my body. I find my balance again, my control.

And control is everything.

As a child, I felt helpless, a prey to my father, and then, those callous scientists who made me disappear in one of their cages. Never again.

My mother's gentle, smiling face appears in front of my eyes. Every day, I see her light blonde hair and slate-gray eyes in my reflection. My daily reminder of my unalterable past.

Enough with the trip down memory lane, Bez grunts with annoyance.

I'm sending a text to the head of security, telling him to discreetly put a man on Bart, when my phone starts ringing. It's Rami.

"What is it?" I answer.

"C-3PO, after the dirt I dug up on the handsy lawyer and his disturbingly immaculate sibling, I expected a more grateful reply!" Rami is the family hacker. He helps us find out if the donors are deserving of a painful death by our hands or not.

"Serena did most of it," I taunt him. Serena is Rami's infallible AI. She helps him with cyber research and whatever else we need to get our hands on the donors. She also cyclically checks our phone lines making them secure, so that we can talk freely about our side business.

"And who created Serena, eh?" His retort is cut off by a moan—the agonized kind—and then the sound of a fist hitting something hard. Repeatedly.

"Having fun?" I ask him. Bez enjoys the sounds of violence coming from the phone, and I do too. I wish I was there bestowing some of that pain with my knives. My skin turns itchy and I pull at the collar of my shirt trying to release some of the uncomfortable sensation.

"Immensely. I'm watching my grizzly of a boyfriend pound a fucker into the ground. My dick couldn't be hard—"

"Red!" I hear Hunter, the grizzly in question, calling him. "Bring that sweet ass here."

"Cooooming!" he tells his boyfriend, then lowers his voice. "I'll definitely do that later as well."

"You wanted something?" My tone is flat, but I'm quickly getting more annoyed by him and the pile of cases on my mahogany desk.

I hear footsteps and a rustling sound, then Rami says, "You need to go check out Crimson, an exclusive sex club."

"Prostitution?" I shift in my chair again, the itch wandering over my skin increases. Any kind of mistreatment of women is something I can't tolerate.

It's surely related to what happened to my mother.

Tonight, I have a donor to take care of, which will soothe the uneasy sensation finally.

"No. Drugs," Rami replies, as I hear more grunts and Hunter's gruff voice in the background.

"Phoenix related, I presume." Phoenix is a criminal mastermind involved in drug trafficking, assassinations, and the abductions and deaths of innocent people. We have no idea who they are but they've become a person of interest since they got involved in making live videos of teens being beaten to death. Ollie's brother, Sully, almost lost his life because of it. After that, Phoenix rapidly climbed our shitheads list and took the first place. The elusive fucker is still out there playing a cat and mouse game with Rami. My brother is becoming obsessed with him. It's good he found Hunter, who distracts him from time to time, or he'd be stuck in his research 24/7.

"Yes. Ten women and six men have been hospitalized all over Chicago in the last two weeks, exhibiting confusion, memory loss, and signs of sexual assault."

My teeth grind, making a cracking sound. "Were they dosed with GHB?"

"The date-rape drug? At first, I thought that was the case, but I talked to Art—"

Hunter cuts Rami off. "When did you meet Art?" His voice has taken on a low, dangerous register.

"You know how much I love that bear-y possessive side of yours, but I contact my informants from time to time. It's part of what I do. With Art, I just talked on the phone, Hunter Bear." I can't see, but clearly hear the smirk in my brother's voice.

A curse and then a kissing sound comes over the line. I'm about to hang up when Rami talks again, almost out of breath, "Art said that when dosed, the victims felt sharp, burning pain all over their bodies."

"Pain?" Memories of excruciating agony try to find space inside my head, and the itch is too much to bear for a second.

Breathe, or I'll take charge. Bez's threat spears through the chaos in my mind, and I take a few gulps of air before I can open my eyes again. Bez is strong, stronger than me, but he's also a lazy bastard, who likes to lie back and watch unless the situation calls for him.

"Are you there? Too busy commanding your troupe of lawyers, as usual?" Rami's voice reminds me of the conversation we are having. Fuck.

"Continue." My voice is trembling slightly, but he doesn't seem to notice.

"There seems to be only two ways to take the pain away, a strong sedative or...pleasure." Incredulous silence follows his words for a few seconds.

My frozen mind starts firing thoughts as Hunter asks, "Are you fucking serious?"

Could it be?

"It makes me sick to my stomach, but it's true. The pain is agonizing, almost unbearable, but endorphin releases generated by pleasure can placate it. The drug leaves no trace in the blood. We need a sample of it to identify it."

"Is Art a viable informant?"

"Yes. He has never given me false info," Rami says with conviction. "Some of the victims' memories are still very hazy from what I read in their psychiatric files. But I followed their digital footprints, even though someone tried to erase them. I could link five of them to the club, Crimson. You need to infiltrate tonight and see if you can get a sample."

"Tonight? Can't you do it? I have my donor scheduled for tonight."

And you fucking need it, Bez uselessly reminds me. Because my prickling body is already a constant reminder of what I need to do to make the uneasiness stop. Killing a donor and then moving on to the next one—while all Bez needs is fucking and rock music.

I've never particularly cared about the victims. I don't sympathize with them even though I don't like the injustice they suffered. The universe

doesn't settle the score as it should. So, I do. But I mostly kill to assuage my own need, no other reason.

"Serena found Phoenix's online signature while searching for any link to this drug and located a warehouse. I'm going there with Raph, Hunter, and Opal as soon as we are done here," Rami lets me know.

"What about Uri? He has extreme tastes; he actually goes to these kinds of clubs. Send him."

"Uri is into...five *hundred* shades of gray. You know why you're the best option."

Yes. Because in case I'm dosed, this drug won't work on me.

"It can't wait, Gabe. My contacts say the drug isn't on the streets yet, but Phoenix is involved, so we need to expect the worst. Three victims died as a result of being dosed, and the last one tried to commit suicide because she was bombarded with flashbacks from the night she was drugged."

I sigh. "People are having different reactions to the drug, which means that whoever is testing it is using people as lab rats." Just like those scientists did to us.

"This has priority, Gabe."

Normally, I'd agree with him, but I haven't killed in three weeks, and I can't keep procrastinating. Need the itch to go away. "And my donor? The shithead that slowly poisoned to death his three wives and is on number four now, doesn't?"

Hunter replies, "Rague can take care of it. He needs it. He has been out far too long."

He's right. Two days ago, Rague tore both arms off a donor in the FUNS room—the Fucked Up Nasty Shitheads room is where we take care of the donors at our base—and then proceeded to melt his face with a blow torch. He's been working on himself the past two months, but his inner anger still needs an outlet.

“I can’t take this to the police. I don’t have enough proof,” Rami adds. “Nothing would stick at the moment. Plus, it’s Phoenix related. We need to take care of it our way.”

Who the fuck care! Don’t give in, Bez says.

I ignore him, and reply to Rami, “Alright.” My capitulation earns an angry growl from Bez.

“It’ll be easy for you since your firm helped the owner of the club with a small legal issue.”

My law firm has numerous clients. “Who?”

“Philip Bailey, owner of a successful chain of night clubs. Crimson is his first sex club. I’ll email you his background with all the sordid details.”

An image of a tall, bald guy in a dark green suit with tattoos covering his hands and neck pops inside my head. I’d met him a month ago while I was having lunch and Bart Dorridge stopped by my table to introduce me to him. He was a potential client Bart was having a meal with, but maybe there was more to it. Interesting.

“Your squeaky-clean lawyer, Bart Dorridge took care of his case. After that, he went to his club more than a few times.” Rami almost read my thoughts.

“Is he involved in this?”

“Don’t know yet. But he’s definitely good at hiding his dirty secrets—as I told you a few days ago, his background is immaculate. I’ll look more into his pathetic life. In the meantime, tonight is anyone-in, which means that non-members can enter the club. Well, non-members who know about the very secretive sex club. But you have to have the red ticket—the courier must have delivered it to your office this morning.”

My eyes fall to an unopened envelope on my desk with my name written on it near a ludicrous cartoon of a robot—clearly made by Rami. A red square card with the name of the club and its address written in gold letters slides out when I tear the edge open.

“Got it,” I let Rami know as I turn the card between my fingers.

“Show it at the club entrance, and it’ll get you in. Bailey is always there after ten. He’ll probably welcome you and show you around. See if you can get some information out of him. Oh, you got the red ticket from another member of the club. Members want to keep their privacy, so he won’t ask for names. But just prepare a backstory like you were bored, wanted something more exciting, more illicit.”

“Don’t need your help,” I remind him. It’s not my first undercover job. Also Linda thought us well how to blend in.

“I’m just being thorough, C-3PO.” My brother uses again the nickname he gave me when we were kids.

C-3PO, always hilarious, Bez chuckles.

A loud scream comes over the line, and then Rami’s abrupt yelling makes me jerk the phone away from my ear, “...Yeah, that’s what you get when you piss my bear man off!”

I hang up, finally getting away from the endless call. I got everything I needed from my brother, and if there’s more, he can email it to me. I slide the red club card inside my jacket and leave my office.

My PA’s desk is empty once again, and as I cross the floor to get to the elevator, everybody quiets, quickly looking down and away from me. Only the sound of the phones ringing from the reception desk echoes in the air. A client greets me from one of the conference rooms, and I tilt my head their way without halting my steps. I command with a firm fist. I’m a tough boss, but a fair one—as long as I give a damn, which usually I don’t. I don’t allow mistakes and rarely give second chances, but if my staff works hard, they get rewarded.

You fucking bumped your donor to go check out a sex club, Bez hisses as the doors to the elevator close.

I grit my teeth against the feeling of my skin crawling. He can feel it too, obviously, that’s why he’s pissed—not that he has any kind of self-control usually.

Bez and I are completely opposite. He’s impulsive, boisterous, irrepressible, remorseless, relentless, and with no care for rules or anybody but himself.

His only purpose is to protect us.

We'll find another one tonight, I reply.

Right, he huffs with incredulity, or *I'll find a tight hole to pound at that club.* He doesn't add anything else. For that, I'm grateful. He's not a very talkative person, which is fortunate since co-fronting impacts my relationships and everyday conversation.

Having two distinct identities at the wheel makes living a delicate dance between managing inner conversations and external interactions. It took me years of therapy with Meg to learn how to juggle multiple conversations at once, maintaining coherence while staying present in the moment without disrupting the flow of dialog externally. It can still be disorienting. I pretend to be on my phone at times to avoid awkward situations and the following questioning.

That's why Bez's few, short comments here and there don't bother me. We are very different individuals, but there's a layer of respect between us encouraged by self-survival.

The elevator stops on the twentieth floor with a chiming sound. The lobby of the HR office is filled with people holding resumes and chatting, hoping to find a place in my prestigious law firm. The receptionist smiles at me a little too eagerly.

I assume my work-stern look, and without making eye contact with anybody, I move toward Evelyn's office with confident strides.

I turn into the corridor on the left and stop in front of the manager's door, which is slightly ajar and allows me to see inside. My gaze zeros in on a waterfall of light caramel hair, a stripe of golden skin revealed by a loose pink shirt falling down a delicate shoulder and a pair of black high-heeled ankle boots.

Lori Boone.

He's sitting with his back to me in front of Evelyn's desk and near my crying ex-temp PA. He's slightly turned to the right in his chair while talking, and I can see the profile of his upturned nose, the pinkness filling his cheek, and the shiny lipstick on his red lips—the upper one forms a

round arch, while the lower one has a dip in the middle that makes me think about softness and bites.

I can't stop my eyes from wandering over him. He's different from anybody I've ever met and I feel ambivalent toward him. I don't know how to deal with him. Usually, people are quite predictable in my experience, while he's a mystery I cannot pin down.

It gives me headaches. Which means that he affects me. Which in turn is preposterous.

He looks petite and overly flamboyant, but he has an understated strength to him and such confidence in himself that charms most people and intimidates the rest. I'm not in either group. While Bez...

Little Wasp looks edible today, he growls darkly.

Little Wasp, that's what Bez calls Lori. He. Likes. Lori. When he never likes anybody. He can barely stand me, and I'm his headmate. I cannot figure out why Bez is interested in him. I know he wants to fuck him, but there's more.

He wants sex, especially with men, while I'm not a very sexual person. When I feel the need to fuck, I veer toward women. I only had a couple of encounters with men in college. I was curious, I scratched the itch. Bez, on the other hand, gets his quickies often, but he's never expressed an ongoing interest toward any of them.

Why Lori?

He does it for me, man, Bez replies. *Look at that impish smile and those plump fuckable lips. Want to fill them with my hard dick.*

So damn vulgar, I tell him.

Like you weren't staring at him with filthy thoughts two seconds ago, he retorts.

He's...peculiar.

Is that why you follow him every day after work until he gets into his car? Because he's peculiar?

He works late, and I'm changing the security in the underground garage. It's just a precaution.

He's a buzzing little wasp with an unstoppable, conniving mind, an ass that doesn't quit, and a sting ready to prick anyone who bothers him, Bez replies like he didn't hear a word I said.

I counter, *Everybody calls him Gremlin.*

Like I fucking care what everybody does. He's a little wasp. End of discussion.

He's rarely this final about anything. Doesn't care enough usually.

My ex-assistant lets out a muffled sob, and I hear Lori saying to him, "Oh, you're a sandwich short of a picnic if you keep wasting those tears on a lost job."

"A what?" Evelyn asks him.

"One of my gran's sayings." He waves a dismissive hand at her. Lori's grandmother was from the UK, and he got all these odd British words and expressions from her. "Firing people is the boss's go-to response for everything, kind of like the Queen of Hearts and her 'Off with their heads.'"

"Right. Here take this and show it to Mr. Crandild when you go see him tomorrow for the PA job. Good luck!" Evelyn quickly says, handing an envelope to the temp PA. She lifts her gaze and it meets mine.

I push the door open, revealing my presence to everybody and take a step inside her office.

"Mr. Reed," she addresses me, hurriedly standing up from her chair behind the desk, while all the eyes in the room turn on me. Lori's impish smile—as Bez has called it—doesn't falter. My ex-assistant quickly dries his eyes, and after uttering a few mumbled words, he leaves the office, being very careful not to brush against me while he walks away.

"All of a sudden I feel a chill in the room, Eve." Lori turns to Evelyn who frowns in response. "It's like a dark entity just entered the premises," he insolently adds. "I can see my breath!"

“And I can hear you,” I tell him.

“I know that. Quit looking at me in that tone of voice,” he says flippantly, crossing his arms in front of his narrow chest. But I can see the glimmer of humor in his gaze.

I cast him a haughty look. “What tone of voice?”

“That!” He points a delicate finger in my direction. “With the Paddington hard stare.”

Paddington the Bear?

That smart mouth. I’ve never believed in demonic possession, but I might have to revise my opinion on the matter because Lori is...

A little wasp, Bez reminds me. If Satan ever summoned him to hell, he’d go with a pleased smirk and act like he owns the place.

“Mr. Reed?” I hear the HR manager calling me. Damn, I got lost in my inner conversation again.

“Evelyn, did you get around my temp PA issue?” I ask her. My question produces a snort out of Lori.

I shift my attention back to him. “Something amusing?”

He wets his lower lip, the cherry red tip of his tongue makes a quick appearance, sliding in the soft dip in the middle before retreating as his teeth slowly trail the same path. A tiny mole on the edge of his incredible mouth strangely catches my eyes, while Bez finds the whole lips move deeply arousing.

“Your temp PA reign of terror? Not particularly,” Lori shamelessly retorts. Makes me want to see that mouth screaming. In pain or pleasure, I’m not sure.

Both, Bez growls, and I feel my dick twitch inside my boxer briefs.

“What is Mr. Boone doing here?” I ask Evelyn.

She sends a quick glance at Lori, then swallows, looking tense before answering. “Mrs. Kruger, the administrative manager had an...accident.”

Lori's sniff follows.

"Accident?" I focus my gaze on him.

"A glue-related accident. She found herself stuck to her computer mouse, her desk drawer, and...her chair. We had to cut her skirt to release her," Evelyn quickly replies.

Lori's attempt at sucking his lips in to cover his mirth is less than subtle.

"Why do you think Mr. Boone is implicated?"

I know Lori is guilty. Like he was of the stink bomb in one of the associate's offices. And also of the glittery purple dick in the box that exploded on an HR assistant's face in the middle of the reception area. They had made homophobic jokes at work and heavily mocked Lori, I had discovered. But I still should have fired him, if for no other reason than the blatant way he addresses me. And yet, he's still working for the firm, while I've fired or transferred everybody else.

"Mrs. Kruger complained to HR about Mr. Boone's choice of wardrobe a few days ago," Evelyn says with a sigh.

Feisty Little Wasp, Bez chuckles. *Fire the hag. Nobody trashes him.*

"Rubbish! Miss Scrooge—"

"Kruger," Evelyn tries to correct him, but Lori just keeps going.

"And please remember the Miss, the bitter spinster insists on it. If she feels intimidated by real fashion, it is hardly my fault. Karma always finds her bitches." Lori stands up, displaying his lean legs covered in a pair of skinny gray jeans with fringes on the sides. He surely has his own signature fashion style. He places his painted black nails on his hips, and I'm suddenly hit with his delicate lily scent.

"So, how did she get stuck to her desk?" Evelyn asks him.

"Perhaps some people skipped pre-school and can't handle glue as well as taste."

He's always so unapologetically himself. And I respect that since I know how hard it is to stay true to yourself. But this is a place of work, not kindergarten. You'd think people should know how to behave.

"Do you have any proof?" I ask Evelyn.

"No, but this is not the first *accident* where Mr. Boone is most likely involved."

"Please, stop with the 'mister' already. We meet at least once every two weeks, Lori is just fine." He says it like it's a good thing to meet the head of HR weekly.

"Lori." She gives him a quick, exasperated-looking half smile.

"Am I the F word?" Lori asks, looking between me and her. "Fired?" he clarifies.

"No!" Bez growls out, taking charge of my mouth. He never interferes during work hours. But wanting to keep Lori working for my firm seems essential to him...and his dick. And that's one of the reasons why Lori is still working for me.

Lori's amber eyes are filled with puzzlement. But he's fast at regaining his sassy attitude. "Even if I tell you I'm the mastermind behind Miss Scrooge's sticky accident?"

"Miss Kruger," Evelyn tries again with a sigh. It doesn't really matter what her name is, since she'll be gone next week.

"Do you want to get fired, Lori?" I ask. More likely, he's testing the limits to my patience.

"Is that a trick question? 'Coz in that case, I'll take help from the audience." He waves at Evelyn's befuddled face.

Bez chuckles, it sounds like a rumble noise inside my head.

I keep staring at Lori until he says, "It seems to be only logical to expect it."

"Logical," I repeat in a deadpan tone. After interacting with Lori in the last few months, I reached the conclusion that his brain must suffer a logic

insufficiency. “This is a workplace not a frat house. If someone offends you, come to Evelyn and file a complaint.”

“I’m no snitch.” He sniffs like one of those Italian gangsters on TV.

“Are you good at organizing and managing day-to-day events?”

His frown quickly gives way to an agape mouth and widened eyes. “I’m a paralegal, not a PA! And frankly, working for you would feel like hitting my head repeatedly against a brick wall—moronic and time wasting.”

Evelyn gasps at his last statement, while I have to stifle a twitch of my lips. The people working for me treat me with deference and overt politeness and attentiveness. Lori is the exception. His crude honesty at times is refreshing. But mostly, I’m indifferent to it. He’s here because I need to keep an eye on him and see if he slips. Discover what’s his angle.

“Very well. Break time has ended.” I give him an empty stare, to which he responds with an eye roll and mumbled words too low to decipher.

“Ta-ta, Eve. Boss.” He sashays out of the office. I watch his high, plump ass more intensely than I should—because of Bez. But I have to admit those jeans wrap it perfectly.

A perfect peach for my teeth, Bez grunts.

They are my teeth too, I remind him.

Like you don’t enjoy when I have my fun at gay clubs.

Evelyn clears her throat, and I only then remember her presence. “This temp PA issue...” I start.

two

LORI



This day is utter demonic shite! It smells like crap. It looks like crap. And *I* feel like crap.

It all started with a few unsatisfactory hours of sleep caused by the urgency of finishing an essay for my constitutional law class. It went pear-shaped when I woke up to find a zit on my chin that stopped me from reciting my mirror-mirror-on-the-wall chant because the fairest of them all can't sport a bloody pimple on their face. Snow White does converse with animals and sings with *birds*—hidden innuendo there?—which makes her mad as a bag of ferrets in my opinion, but she's always a thing of beauty.

Bollocks!

On my way out of work, I quickly glance at the empty reception desk as my cute leather boots take me inside the almost empty elevator. Still, if someone *accidentally* brushes my ass again, I'll turn Texas Chainsaw Massacre on all the riders. I have to get rid somehow of the shitty vibes inside me.

And I'm back to today's shite. My morning princess-demoted-to-commoner routine was disturbed by the landlord, a.k.a. Octopus Prime—his sweaty hands always find their way near my body; it's like he has multiple arms sticking out of his torso. He evicted me for having a pet in the apartment.

He said he received too many complaints, and that the noises that Wednesday makes are like Satan's alarm clock.

I brought Wednesday home two weeks ago from Pet Palace, the pet shelter I volunteer at. I couldn't resist her unmoving reddish eyes almost entirely covered by a black and white fluffy crest, the little claw on the back of her feet and the considerable waddle of her round hips. Her careless attitude and unfazed look make her adorably weird and comically creepy.

I never thought I'd ever get a pet, but she was mine the minute I saw her ingurgitating an alien-looking, eight-hairy-legged and yellow beady-eyed spider like a tic-tac. Now I have my own personal home-based eco-friendly pest control solution—and a two-week-notice eviction.

You would think that the people living in a building which is a few tip-tap steps from collapsing wouldn't care about pets. Plonkers, the lot of them!

I've been late with the rent, it's happened only a couple of times, while Curly Barbie from 6B is always asking the landlord for a few more days. I know she gives him another kind of lip service as an extra. I can unfortunately hear the big, oily, old cockwomble with a one-dollar beer belly, an allergy to soap, and garlic breath making rapid gurgling sounds like a dying turkey when Curly...*mouths* her thanks.

I can also read his repellent thoughts every time he leers at my mouth—they make me hurl.

The elevator stops on the first floor and everybody else exits, leaving me alone. I can see the dark evening sky beyond the front glass walls of the building and...a tall guy in a hoodie and a white mask—which covers his entire face—standing on the sidewalk before the elevator doors close once again. Lord, I've been working late for too many days, my sight is playing tricks on me. I should go to see an eye doctor. But the Kramer case is a real brain teaser since the opposition keeps magically pulling out new testimonies and evidence.

Not that I have anybody waiting for me at home, except Wednesday.

I sigh inwardly—and outwardly as well. Because fuck my life and this day that could've only brought the usual trip to the HR office and the sight of

Gabriel Reed, my boss's boss's boss and my bestie's brother-in-law.

He's always so detached. If his pulse gets any lower, we'd have to declare him dead.

Admittedly, the bloke has taste in clothes. Over his shirt and those surprisingly wide shoulders, he always wears a smooth, tight vest. Today it was anthracite gray with a nice suit jacket on top. His long legs sported suit pants of the same color that fit his strong muscular thighs just right. His blond hair was combed back in the usual style, no lock out of place. He looked like an untouchable, superior entity.

I can never decide if my urge to strangle him is stronger than the one to tear off his stylish clothes. He is so infuriatingly attractive. His face is almost too perfect to be real. Maybe that's why I need to punch it; perfection is bloody overrated. While angry sex is truly the best. But all I get from Gabe is flat indifference.

I don't take it personally. Everybody gets the same unfazed treatment from him, even his family. Don't know if his emotional detachment was caused by the horror he went through during that secret government project or by the evil-dispatching family business. The only time I've seen him show a tad of interest is for a donor—or maggot, as I like to call the arseholes they kill.

The method he uses to unalive them is the most frightening among the brothers—I've observed them all, enjoying the various styles. They all have their own merits, but his lack of verbalization combined with his soulless silver stare and knife throwing instills mindless fear in the maggots.

He maintains the record among the bros for most involuntary bladder release—in other words he makes the maggots so scared shitless they piss themselves. I keep a torturing record book (TRB) on all the brothers—using code words and nicknames that not even DaVinci could have deciphered—tracking most blood spilled, skin carving work, talkative tormentor, eclectic weapon user, shirts splattered. I started it only recently since I became part of the evil-dispatching family business only a few months back when Ollie met KKJ—his husband, whom I call King Kong Junior. I haven't killed any maggot yet, but I'm getting there.

My TRB needs more info. Raph, the psycho Bully Boy, is the brothers' historian, he has an eidetic memory filled with details, perfect for my book. But he's always too busy nailing his husband.

I obviously didn't struggle when I found out about the family side business. No ethical conundrum here. I actually felt like I fit right in—who wouldn't? It's a sausage fest with *seven* tormented brothers. I've always had a thing for ruthless men. As long as their ruthlessness isn't aimed at me. Twisted, but it's already too late for my wicked mind. And the consequences of my actions are only mine, right?

I've been fighting against bullies and prats all my life. I learned how to defend myself, and because of my eccentric clothes, odd way of expressing myself, and don't-give-two-shits attitude I have to do it on a daily basis.

I'm not ashamed of who I am, I worked hard to reach this spectacular level of Lori-ness. I made a few mistakes on the way, but I can easily say that I like myself.

Gran would have approved the whole Angels of Wrath enterprise. She'd have made me a tea and laughed at the bloody irony. Life can truly be a slag.

The elevator finally stops at the underground parking garage. I take a second to push away the sorrow that overtakes me when I think about her, then I make my way to my car as I look for the keys inside my Dior bag. I need to cross the whole parking lot because—and this is more demonic shite to add to the pile—I couldn't find a free spot closer to the elevator.

I'm a few feet from my car when the hair on the back of my neck stands up as though someone is watching me. Glancing around the gray cement structure, I immediately spot a man with a smirk stretching his thin lips. "Hey, do you know if there's a bar around here?"

My eyes slide quickly over his much taller physique and long, wild as if windblown black hair brushing against the tops of his shoulders. Super tight jeans and a t-shirt under a chocolate brown windbreaker cover a fit body. I've never seen him before, but the firm has clients coming and going every day. His dark, calculating eyes leave me feeling slightly unsettled. I brush it

off and keep walking to my car as I reply, “Drink-Me is two blocks west if you like beer.”

“I sure do. Like to grab one with me?” he asks, his voice coming from right behind me.

When I turn around, he’s right in my personal space. Once again, my blazing fire attracts moth-like personalities. My stranger danger radar is bleeping like crazy though. I tighten my hold on the keys in my fist and smile sweetly as I say, “Not even if the Guinness bloke comes out to pour it.”

He narrows his eyes with what looks like annoyance, but the smirk on his face doesn’t fall. Using an arrogantly dominant move, he places his hand on the roof of my car, forcing me to lean back. His arm brushes my curls, and he gets even closer to my upturned face. The stink of cigarettes coming off him makes my nose scrunch up.

“Just one drink. You won’t regret it, cutie.”

I like the confidence, but...*cutie*? Gag, hurl, and puke. “Although this conversation is as sparkling as a coal mine, I have to impolitely decline. And I’d like to breathe some clean air. Back off, Chimney.”

Surprisingly, he does. But unsurprisingly, he grabs the front of my pink shirt and yanks me toward him, pulling me up onto my tippy-toes. His playful smirk turns vile. “Let’s go for a ride.”

A ride? How can guys still not understand the word no?

“Fuck off,” I succinctly tell him.

His leery eyes halt on my lips, and just like Octopus Prime, I know what he is thinking. My mouth is a gift from heaven and a curse from hell—Gran’s words, not mine. The shape and plumpness attract men of all kinds until I part my sexy lips and the words coming out make blokes run away with their tail between their legs.

“I can easily change your mind,” he adds suggestively and very unimaginatively. I can feel his unwanted pheromones wafting my way. If I could, I’d throw up through my eyeballs.

My mood, already as dark as the pits of hell, cannot be more affected by the relentless prat.

But this is a gloriously perfect end to this sedative-use-inducing day. I need to vent, and here is my punching bag served in a pair of ridiculously too-tight jeans.

“Listen carefully, you tosser, take your hands off my favorite off-shoulder shirt, or I’ll be the one having fun here sending your balls back to their home planet.” I give him a stern look, but he doesn’t seem impressed.

Underestimating my petite size is such a cliché.

“Listen, cutie—” I don’t let him finish, too eager to get to the enjoyable part —while trying not to peel the skin off my face at the sound of that horrific *cutie* again. I plant my feet down and assume the defense stance raising my hands near his chest. Then I hit his forearm hard twice with the palm of my right hand as my left fist, still gripping the keys, gets him right in the nuts. His *oomph* of pain makes my body titillate with delight.

Titillate? Ugh, what is this word doing inside my brain?

As soon as his grasp loosens around my shirt, I grab his arm and twist it, forcing him to back off as I shove him away from me.

I take two steps back, letting out a chuckle at his half-bent position and loud grunts. “Is that all you got?”

I internally wince as I carefully place my rented Dior bag on its side on the dirty, disgusting ground. If it gets stained, Chimney will die a slow, painful death.

“Getting beaten up by an *undeniably* gorgeous bloke almost half your size. Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. I should post your epic defeat.” My taunt has the desired effect as he turns his twisted mouth and angry eyes toward me.

He slides a small pocketknife out of his jacket and slowly straightens up while spitting on the ground.

Danger always brings me clarity, that’s why I’m good at fighting. My mind turns incredibly clear while the adrenaline pumps inside my veins.

He starts toward me as he hisses, “I like ‘em fighting. I’m gonna have all the fun here.”

I take a step back and slide my pink leather belt out of my jeans loops. I wrap it around my left hand, so that the buckle end swings loose, without taking my eyes off the advancing prick. “If you find bleeding fun, you’re definitely going to have it all.”

My heart is pounding inside my chest as I watch him rush toward me in slow motion, knife in his left hand ready to do some damage. I wait until he’s on me to duck and slip to the right, which throws him off enough that I can swiftly loop the belt around his wrist and give it a hard twist.

The knife clatters from his hand and skitters somewhere on the ground as I release his arm and give the belt an abrupt jerk letting the buckle hit the bloke straight on the nose. Blood paints his lower face as he bends and stumbles back. I halt his retreat by grabbing a fistful of his hairspray-hardened locks and yank his head up to belt-slap him hard on the cheek.

As I let him go my eyes fall on my hand. My fingers feel sticky from whatever cheap product he applied on his hair, and fuck, my black nail polish is ruined! I hate when that happens, it makes me crazy. My distraction costs me dearly as, out of the blue, his elbow smashes into the side of my skull, on the soft spot high on the temple.

Bloody fucking hell! Black spots cover my vision. I’m barely able to keep my balance as the sharp-as-a-broom-stick-in-the-butt pain registers. I absorb the trauma, swallowing the throbbing ache, then kick my way slowly back to the surface. When I open my eyes, Chimney is in front of me, his fist back and ready to send me to the floor.

I’m trying to make my head work and find a way to avoid the hit when Gabe is suddenly looming over us. He lands a nice stiff left on the prick’s face and then hits under his ribs where the sternum ends with the narrow side of his premium leather, solid brown briefcase. It paralyzes the bloke’s diaphragm, making him gasp like a fish out of water and double over, pitching forward onto the hard ground.

I hold back a moan. Seeing a man fighting is four-red-chili-peppers hot, even if the man is Gabriel Reed, my insufferably icy boss. When I’m in his

presence, I can't stop my belligerent side—and hell on earth I try—from bickering, bantering, and quarreling while he barely responds. His indifference around me awakens my bellicose self to clash, battle, and crusade on his ass even though he barely glances my way—or maybe it's because of that.

For a second, I see a glimpse of rage in his eyes as he kicks the bloke in the ribs again and again until he barks, "Enough!"

To whom? His own Italian full-grain leather shoe-clad foot? I'm not doing anything but holding my head and staring at him, so it must be to himself.

"You okay?" Gabe asks me, and his voice is...different—deeper, gruff. That elbow must have gotten my head harder than I thought because when Gabe turns toward me, he looks like his usual pompous, stunning self. Steel gray, impenetrable eyes and his inscrutable countenance that gives close to nothing away. Fuck, he's handsome. The more I see him, the more attractive he becomes. The idea of getting him to fuck me is becoming more solid inside my head.

I nod while brushing my curls away from the aching side of my forehead.

In two steps, he's in my personal space, crowding me, taking my breath away. Gaze focused on my temple, nostrils flaring. His rich cologne envelops me, making me lightheaded for a second. Or perhaps the hit I got does that.

We've never been this close to each other—his natural stiffness sends stay-away vibes all around him. He's not touching me, but I can feel the warmth coming off him and penetrating my cooling body. It's weird how no inner warning bells are ringing even though Gabe is standing a foot away from me. I mean, I could count the lighter streaks in his wheat blond hair, and for the first time, I notice the dark blue flecks in his gunmetal eyes. They are the color of a night fog, his whole world hidden in their depths.

I feel a delicious and unwelcome tingling sensation in my belly as his gaze lands on my lips, it makes me want to show off my assets, peacock style. Instead, I swiftly turn to retrieve my bag from the ground and put some space between us. Because this is Gabe cold-blooded Reed. I dislike the handsome twit...very much. Yes. Yes! Very much indeed.

“I was taking care of it,” I tell him, while wiping the bottom side of my Dior. I wouldn’t have gone down. I’d have found a way to beat the arsehole.

He makes a humming sound which says nothing and everything at the same time.

“You think I couldn’t have kicked that bloke’s arse?”

“I’ve seen you do it enough times I won’t be added to the group of idiots who keeps underestimating you.”

Despite the lack of emotion in his tone, the words he utters make me speechless for a few seconds, but then my tongue regains its snark. “I wanted to do my mean high kick.”

“Mean high kick?” That’s lawyer 101, repeating what the opposition says using a slightly derisive or bored tone to irritate them, and boy am I vexed when he does that.

“You sound dubious. Should I feel insulted?” I place my hands on my hips in a defensive move, but the truth is that I can’t be bothered by people’s assumptions anymore. My skin has gotten extra thick—but still soft as a baby’s tushy thanks to my beauty regimen.

“I’m just wondering how you’ll keep your balance if you try to move in those shoes.” His eyes jump to my high-heeled ankle boots. So bloody observant.

I snort. Because he doesn’t know that when I’m barefooted I walk on my tippy-toes like a ballerina after many hours of practice. I feel naked without those extra inches under my soles. I’m so used to wearing heels, I move better in them.

“That sounds like a challenge.” I don’t like to lose—ever. It’s gotten me in trouble more than a few times, but damn what a rush. I’d do that all over again if I had the choice. My usual M.O. is speak first, think and regret later, then ask for forgiveness if I care enough.

“It wasn’t.” He looks more rigid than usual as he takes off his suit jacket and folds it over his arm. He clenches his left hand, then extends his long,

masculine fingers out a couple of times in a nervous movement. “Do you know him?”

“Who?” I point at the empty space on the ground where the prick was lying just a few seconds ago and jerk back at the angry, deep growl that comes out of Gabe’s mouth. I didn’t know that fighting could turn him into this sexy beast. I’ve always seen him so composed.

“He must have run off when we were...distracted.” I shrug, studying the slightly darker color of his short beard.

“Who did you piss off this time?” Gabe asks.

“Mmm.” I pretend to take some time to ponder his question as I tap my finger on my chin. “The list is quite long. In this case, it was just some daft creep who smelled like an ashtray.”

I debate whether I should mention the bloke’s intention of dragging me to his car but I push the thought away. It isn’t a big deal, and not the first time someone tried something like that with me. Wackos are everywhere, and I can handle myself just fine.

My eyes fall on a red card on the ground, and I bend down to pick it up. The word Crimson is written on it together with an address.

“Can I have that back?” Gabe holds up his hand, and after glancing at the golden writing on the card again, I place it in his palm.

“Is that an invitation to a secret Masonic meeting? Are you going to wear one of those black, baggy, pointed face masks *American Psycho* style? Will there be any sexual rituals involved?”

Gabe just stares at me with eyes that don’t give anything away, and then points at my car. “Get in. I’ll tell Rami to pull the security footage and see if he can get a name on the guy who assaulted you.”

“Alright. What an anticlimactic end to this shite of a day,” I fake mumble as I take the few steps to my car and open the door while making a show of defeatedly sagging my shoulders. I get in the driver seat and turn a tired-looking gaze to Gabe, who’s staring at my Nissan Micro with an almost

critical eye. It's not much to look at, but is my supermini barracuda, nothing can stop her—not even my sportive driving.

He closes the car door, and then lingers for a few seconds as I roll down the car window.

“Call Sari or Michael to check on your head.” If he hadn’t uttered the words while walking away from me, I’d think he was sweet.

I adjust the rearview mirror to look at my reflection. My big soft curls hide the red spot where I took the hit, but I can feel the bruise forming on my temple. That won’t stop me from finding out what Crimson is and why Gabe is going there.

I take my phone out of my bag and slide it into the holder on top of the dash after typing the address I saw on that red card into Google Maps. I turn on the engine and steer the wheel toward the exit. I give the yellow barrier a *love tap* with the front bumper of my car as I stop to use my parking exit pass. I have to pull my entire torso out of the car window to reach the screen on top of the infernal machine, but the barrier eventually lifts.

I’m making my way out of the parking garage when I see Gabe’s pretentious ass gliding into the back seat of a shiny black car on the other side of the road. Now that I think about it, why was he inside the parking garage if a car was waiting for him outside?

My smirk turns wicked and Grinch-like as excitement starts to bubble inside me. I yell, “It’s stalking time!” And not my first time, either. I’ve learned a few things from my previous mistakes and let two cars follow Gabe’s before I enter the same lane.

“Siri, call Ollie.”

After two endless rings, my bestie picks up.

“Can you talk, or are you being plundered by KKJ?”

“What did I say about my husband’s nickname?” He sighs with exasperation.

Giving funny nicknames keeps my mischievous mind active—plus, Rague really looks like King Kong Junior.

“And hello to you too, bestie with boundary issues,” Ollie adds, making me snort. Like we don’t divulge every single detail of our horizontal rumbas to each other.

I send a colorful curse at the truck driver who cuts in front of me and hides Gabe’s hired black car from my sight. I have the address to Crimson, but tailing his car is so much more fun. Bugger!

“I wish my life had background music.” I sniff as I get a glimpse of my ruined black nail polish, such a perfect color for the middle finger flipping I give to the coiffured lady trying to cross the street.

“I’m going to regret this, but why, Lori?”

“To accompany what the bloody hell is going on, of course,” I explain to him, as I push my head out of the window to spot Gabe’s car.

“Of course,” he patronizes me. “And what song would be playing?”

“Well, ten minutes ago, it’d have been “Milkshake” by Kelis since the prick who tried to assault me in the parking garage at work really wanted to... milk Papa Lori’s gherkin.”

“He what?”

“I’ll tell you later.” I swerve the supermini barracuda to the right and then make a hard turn as I follow the black car, leaving a chorus of honks behind me. “I need a stalking song. I didn’t prepare a new stalking playlist for this, so be a dear and don’t sing for me. Find Sully and ask him to do it.” Ollie sounds like a crow with a case of tonsillitis when he decides to sing.

“Where the heck are you, Lori?”

I pull my head back inside, dreading the reflection of my windblown hair. “Just a sec... Wow, old ladies are fearless when walking with those small chair-looking carts. They use them like a weapon. Respect.” I send her a flying kiss.

“Ha-cha-cha, motherfucker!” Then I scream at the pigeon flying too low near my car.

“You’re DRIVING?” He sounds surprised.

“You’re slipping, mate. But it’s sweet that I haven’t lost the ability to surprise you,” I say cheekily.

“I don’t want to end up as a witness in court when you run over someone—and their family.”

“Hey you pillock, my driving record is clean, no accidents, if you don’t count the truck mishap.” I honk at the moron on the side of the road. “Get on the sidewalk, Forrest Gump!”

“What truck mishap?”

“It happened when you were exiled in the Hocus Pocus cottage with Rague. There was a feral raccoon involved that looked incredibly like Marylin Manson’s estranged twin and a tipped Dunkin’ Donuts truck.” I almost hit a streetlamp when the infernal creature jumped on the hood of my car. “But I got myself a carton of free sugar glazed and jelly donuts that night.” And quite a few pimples to remember the wrongness of my greedy ways.

“How am I still sane after years of being your friend?”

“You aren’t, Ol. Face the facts. I mean, you married a gorilla, who’s possessed by a destructive red demon at times and kills evil people when he’s himself. By the way, how is the red haze flip-over going on?” KKJ is one of Gabe’s foster brothers—or as I call them, the sausage fest, because damn, there’s a delicious man flavor for every taste. He too was experimented on when he was a kid. Don’t remember the scientific details, but at times, he’s governed by a violent red haze attack, going out of control, bloodthirsty, and unstoppable.

“Fine. Same as last time you asked, which was this morning. Are you bored, Lor? I know how you spend your nights at home...with a sock.”

“Two,” I sniff.

“Two socks? That porn must be good!” He chuckles. God, I missed the teasing fucker.

The truth is that I feel a little lost and restless, and I try to distract myself when I can, since... No, I’m not going to think about it.

Ollie must read my mood in my silent response. “I’m sorry I haven’t been around much lately. But we’re back.”

“Yeah?” I stop at a red light, grabbing a piece of gum from the glove compartment to pop in my mouth. “Tell Sully-doo I’m coming for a pizza night tomorrow.” I haven’t seen Ollie’s brother in a few days. He needs company—even more than I do.

“Brad will be here too.” That’s Sully’s bestie.

“When isn’t he?” He still feels guilty for what happened to Sully. Like him being kidnapped was Brad’s fault and not that Phoenix arsehole, a.k.a. Bird Turd. When I get my hands on them, there won’t be any ashes left to resurrect from. “Where are you, mate?”

“The base. Rague just finished with a donor. Who are you stalking, Lori?”

“Gabe.” I ignore his gasp. “Ol, ask KKJ to be my soundtrack. He’s an amazing Captain Corelli with that mandolin of his.” I hear KKJ’s amused grunt through the line. He’s a grumpy gorilla, but he’s perfect for Ollie. Would burn the world to keep him safe.

I envy Ollie at times. Feeling so adored by the person he treasures more than anything else must give him such a euphoric thrill. A thrill only *one* man could never give me. Ollie is right, I easily get bored, especially of my conquests.

“It’s an ukulele, and no, he won’t enable your crazy-ass addiction,” he retorts.

“My only addiction is Yoga. And I remember you ordering me to stalk KKJ a few months back. ‘Follow him,’ you yelled!”

“So help me God, that’s when your stalking fixation started!” he hisses.

I tsk. “Don’t flatter yourself, it was already in my blood, waiting to surface.” I turn on the radio as I yank the wheel back toward the lane, jolting on my seat while I continue to tail Gabe’s black car. Hydrants shouldn’t be placed on the edge of sidewalks, this is the umpteenth time I’ve almost hit one.

“The Diner” by Billie Eilish comes on. “Ollie, this song is bitching fate!”

“Yes, you’re as creepy as the guy she sings about. Tell the squirrel on meth in your head to make a U-turn and go back home!”

“No can do. He’s too busy counting his nuts at the moment.”

“Gabe is on a case,” KKJ’s raspy voice utters.

“All the more reason to go. I want to get deeper into the evil-dispatching business, and this is the perfect opportunity. Plus, Gabe just entered a very posh, very secretive building. I have to go! If it gets too weird, I’ll split.”

“Like it could ever get too weird for you.” It’s Ollie’s turn to snort.

“Remember the night with the hairy Dom, the laughing monkey, and the egg slicer? I fucking draw the line at that horror show.” I park the car two blocks down and grab my *quickie-kit* bag from the back seat. I always leave it in the car, for when I need to look my best to get a quick fuck. I don’t know where I’m going, but the forest green eyeliner, red rose lipstick, and slutty skirt have gotten me inside too many places to count.

Ollie sighs loudly. “How could I forget.”

“Kitty, what is he talking about?” I hear a confused KKJ ask Ollie.

“He can tell you as a bedtime story,” I say, while lifting and turning as I pull down my jeans. “Any advice to give me before I get there?”

“Not giving you any advice just so you can twist it to suit your own warped worldview!” Ollie replies.

“You’re right! No planning. Planning blows!” I move the side mirror toward me and start to apply the eyeliner and lipstick.

“And you twisted my words anyway.”

“I feel the urge to stab you.” I open the car door and push my feet into my ankle boots again. I stand up, and while fixing the tight faux-leather black skirt, I grab my Dolce by D&G from the quickie bag. I spray the perfume in the air and then walk into the lily cloud like a damn queen.

“Thought bats were your thing, didn’t know stabbing was an option.” He knows me so well. It’s a pity I can’t hide a bat under my clothes, though. But the pepper spray in my bag works like a charm as well.

“And the urge has passed,” I pant, as I feel the blood pump faster in my veins.

“Why are you talking funny? What are you doing?”

“Powering up, duh,” I reply, jumping from one foot to the other. “Bad Reputation” by Joan Jett comes on next on the radio. Karma is actually paving the way for me.

“You mean ridiculously hopping around like a rabbit on Red Bull.”

“Are there cameras here?” I look around the small road. “Butt the fuck out of my head!”

“Well, fuck you too,” Ollie mutters.

“Lori, you shouldn’t go. I’m on the phone with Rami, this is a delicate case about a new drug. It’s dangerous.” KKJ sounds as serious as the case is. And the more he tries to stop me, the more he pushes me toward it.

“I’m going in. If you don’t hear from me in an hour—” I pinch my cheeks to turn them pink as Ollie cuts me off.

“I swear to God, I’ll go all alpha hard on your ass if you don’t back off.”

“Ooooh, sounds promising, but we already tried when we were boys. That kiss is still top five on my too-gross-to-ever-try-again list.”

I hear KKJ’s unhappy growl. “It was ages ago, Rague. And, Lori, you know the petty little devil inside all of us? Yours is fucking Lucifer!” Ollie barks.

“And what fun do we have together.” I use a suggestive tone that makes him huff.

KKJ's gruff voice stops our banter. "You should know Crimson is a sex club."

I whistle excitedly as he keeps going. "Tonight, non-members can get in. Tell the guy at the door you are there for the anyone-in event. And be careful, Lori. This drug causes pain, and the only way to alleviate it is to knock the person out or the release of endorphins."

"What?" Ollie and I exclaim at the same time. *What the actual fuck?*

"Sari could determine after reading the victims' statements that they were hit with extreme sexual arousal, so strong it was agonizing if not satisfied."

That's fucked up. I can't believe how wrong this is. What is the world becoming?

"Were they conscious? Did they know what was going on?" I hear Ollie ask his husband.

"The last two had moments of lucidity and could recognize and remember the people with them."

Fuck! Fear and horror try to overwhelm me, but I fight against them and harden my resolve. This is what I've been waiting for, kicking some callous, heartless motherfucker's arse.

"Gabe is not answering my texts," Ollie says. "You shouldn't go, Lori."

"Give me one hour. You know what to do, follow safe-bestie protocol," I remind Ollie. In the past, the protocol came into play when we left a bar with a bloke, but it works just fine in this situation.

"No, I won't wait for your text. We are coming now, and you'll keep this call going. If you're in trouble use the code word."

"Roger that," I mock him as I refresh my curls with my fingers. I know he's worried for my safety, but I've gotten out of worse circumstances than whatever is waiting for me inside that building.

"What's the code word?" KKJ asks.

“Airy-fairy,” both Ollie and I say. It’s a word my gran used to say when describing her weak legs. It made us chuckle every time when we were kids. For a brief moment, her smiling face is so definite in my mind, down to each pronounced wrinkle and the same small mole we share over our upper lip, that it feels like she’s right here in this humid backstreet with me.

I take a deep breath and grab my phone from the dash and the Dior bag from the seat. I lock the supermini barracuda and give my reflection a last check before swaying my hips toward the silver door. My cell is in the outside pocket of the bag as I lift my hand to knock, but the door opens before my knuckles touch the surface.

A tattooed colossus stands between me and the long red corridor behind him blocked by his massive, hairy shoulders and ginormous biceps. He looks me up and down, his pissed bulldog expression doesn’t change as his dark eyes land on my face again.

I cock my hip to the side, cross my arms, and lift a challenging brow his way. “Are you done checking me out, Wookiee? A very kinky night is waiting for me inside.” Confidence is key in life.

“Is it?” He folds his arms as well, which looks quite intimidating on a guy his size, but not enough to stop my lips from moving.

“Have you seen me? They will probably call you to stop the brawl my splendor will cause. Now move your furry tree trunks and let me pass. It’s the anyone-in event tonight,” I tell him, remembering Rague’s words.

Wookiee keeps staring at me for a few more seconds, then takes a step back and creates enough space between him and the doorframe for me to enter.

“Thank you.” *Broody tosser.*

I get why this place is called Crimson, the hallway is the color of blood. Four huge paintings displaying orgy scenes between what I can only assume are supernatural creatures and humans adorn the walls. They are very detailed from the sharpness of the half-bull’s horns, the wicked desire in the demons’ black eyes and their very big dicks, to the man-shaped lizards’ forked tongues and tails. I can almost hear those subjugated humans screaming—surely in pleasure. *Lucky ducks.*

At the end of the corridor there are two solid golden doors—which will presumably lead me to where Gabe is—and a tall, lanky woman with gelled hair standing behind a slick wooden counter. She's wearing a black and white houndstooth suit with an orange floral shirt underneath and a checkered red and green bow. The colorful ensemble forces me to blink a couple of times. I'm very sensitive to patterns, especially when someone is wearing all the wrong ones at the same time. And in this Martin Scorsese red light, she's like a visual bullet right between my eyes.

"Welcome to Crimson. Phone, please," she utters in a nasal voice. One hand is outstretched toward me, palm up, while the other points at the sign behind her on the wall.

No cell phones allowed. Leave them at the entrance. That's why Gabe wasn't answering Ollie's texts.

Bugger! I stick out my bottom lip in a pout. "Ugh."

"If you want to get in, you'll need to follow the rules," she states annoyingly, wiggling her fingers impatiently. "And let me assure you, you do want to get in there." She proceeds to give me a long, knowing stare that does tell me something. Important people are behind those doors, VIPs who don't want their faces and bare asses on the internet. Is it Jude Law making out with Keanu? Martha Stewart and Peter Dinklage? Or Peter Pan and Capitan Hook? Yeah, always thought there was something between the mean pirate with anger problems and the sassy flying boy with daddy issues.

"So, I need to leave my phone here," I repeat to make sure Ollie and KKJ heard it, and lean toward the patterned lady. "Are there promiscuous aliens in there? Cats purring at dogs? Gordon Ramsey on a hunger strike?"

She gives me a stern look. "Phone."

I straighten myself and take my cell out of the pocket of my Dior, being careful to subtly close the call before handing it to her. But before letting it go, I tell her, "Take good care of my baby."

She nods and places it in a metal box and then slides it into one of the numbered cubicles behind her. She hands me a red card with a matching

number to retrieve my phone later and then moves to the doors.

“Any other rules I should know about?” I ask her, as she pushes the golden monstrosities open.

“Drink the champagne,” she stage-whispers, before leaving.

Show time, I tell myself as I hear the doors close behind me.

I find myself on a mezzanine made of gray marble with black veining, columns and all, that opens into a wide crimson room. The ceiling is high and vaulted, covered in golden paint with a dark stone chandelier hanging down in the middle like dark drops of rain.

As I ascend the carpeted red stairs, my eyes flicker from the shiny silver bar counter on the left to the dark, round tables scattered around and the small quartet playing melodic music on the opposite side. Waitresses wearing black satin vests and long pants are walking with trays in hand, nodding and smiling.

People are talking in small groups or tête-à-têtes, wearing fancy suits and elegant dresses. No leashes. No kneeling or licking boots. No naked or even half-naked dudes. It looks like a posh club.

I get a glimpse of a bloke in a white mask in the corner—the same one I saw outside the firm an hour ago. He’s near one of the black marble columns. But when I blink, he vanishes. Is it a play of light and shadows, or am I turning Harley-Quinn mad?

I glance around for the white-masked dude, but nothing. I can easily find Gabe, though. His imposing presence, impeccable manners, and chiseled features are impossible to overlook. As I take the last step down, I lose sight of him. I’m petite, but the leery looks I’m getting remind me once again how my size doesn’t matter.

I veer toward the bar, deciding to follow the patterned lady’s suggestion of getting a drink. Also, sitting on one of those high stools in the corner gives me a nice panoramic view of the room.

The counter is gleaming immaculately, I can actually admire my marvelous reflection in it. And the stool’s leather cushion is cradling my arse cheeks

divinely. Everything screams money here, I could get used to it.

The bartender materializes in front of me. He's dishy and bushy...well, his eyebrows are. I should give him the number of Roberta, the girl that waxes my entire body. She can do miracles with a pair of tweezers.

"Hello." It's incredible how, with a single drawled word of greeting, he lets me know all his filthy thoughts. It's an art that he masters very well, but alas, I'm here to help Gabe with the drug case and the butt kicking.

"Hey. What would you recommend for a thirsty bloke with a propensity for fun?" I flirt right back because bartenders and wait staff are the ears and the eyes of an establishment like this. They know more than they think, and they let it slip out when they're not happy with their working conditions, which they never are. Serving pompous pricks is tough.

"That depends. Is it your first non-member event?"

"Am I that obvious?" I flutter my eyelashes at him.

"No. But you're *that* hard to forget." He wiggles the furry brows, which now look oddly like two hairy caterpillars trying hard to get to a finish line.

I put a flattered expression on my face, and my amazing lips do the rest.

"Someone told me I should try the champagne." He gives me a long, scrutinizing look, and then turns to grab one of the already filled flutes from behind him. He slides a card under the glass bottom as he places it in front of me. "When you're done here, give me a call." I tip the long flute to him and slip the card with his number inside my bag as I take a small sip. The bubbles hit my tongue first, followed by the slightly bitter, fruity taste. This champagne has a strange aftertaste though, almost metallic.

"I will." I smile flirtatiously at him. "How long have you been working here?"

"Since it opened," is his short reply.

"You must like it."

"It's just a job." Caterpillar Brows doesn't reveal much.

“It’s quite a place.” I look around.

“Wait till you see the shade rooms,” he cryptically tells me, making it sound alluring.

“Shade rooms?”

“Go to the ruby one, you’ll definitely enjoy it.” Before I can ask him more, he adds, “You won’t have to wait much longer. One of the members will secure you soon enough.” Then he leaves to serve another customer.

Secure me? What am I, an apartment?

My eyes fall on Gabe again. He has a wench hanging from his stiff arm while talking to some Mr. Hot Shot in a fancy suit. The bloke looks high-class and sly, with an air of command surrounding him. Tall, bald, and tattooed, he must be someone important and good at faking it since he’s smiling at Gabe.

Gabe, with his acquired taste and propensity for offending people all too easily with his cold stare and flat tone.

His smoky eyes suddenly lock with mine. That deep, haughty gaze feels like he’s looking too far inside me.

I always thought gray was a blah color, an unhappy, dull union of black and white. That is until I saw it in his eyes, those bottomless, inscrutable pools, the color of smoke flying over a dormant city. Always alert of their surroundings. Never revealing any of his thoughts.

They have the power to freeze my lungs and pump my heart full of blood. It’s more than a subtle, I-loathe-you, high-level attraction that overwhelms me every time I see him. I don’t like him much, but I don’t have to, to fuck someone. I must admit, though, that I’m not generally picky—the caterpillar-browed bartender would do as well.

I’m suddenly hit by a strange feeling, like an ominous clusterfuck is pending over my head.

I down my glass, trying to shoo it away, when a fifty-something-old bloke slides his elbow onto the counter, obscuring my view of the room.

“Good evenin’, can I interest you in a drink?” His Southern accent is charming, as is his one-million-dollar smile and rugged appearance. A cowboy, interesting.

“Good evening back.” I dip my words in honey and slightly pucker my lips. He signals to the bartender without taking his eyes off me, but Caterpillar Brows is too busy on the other side of the counter.

The cowboy sniffs, but doesn’t lose his relaxed smile. “Would you like to try a fifty-five-year-old whiskey? I have some in the carmine room.”

The whiskey is probably as aged as he is. If I was into much older men, I’d be intrigued. He looks pretty hot. Although I’m not picky, I’m not an anything-goes buffet either. Still, he can be my ticket to see what’s going on behind the slick curtains of this sex club, and I can put him to sleep with two punches and a kick.

I open my mouth to answer when a familiar rich, woodsy cologne envelops me from behind. Perfectly manicured, strong fingers land on the counter near my hand, and for the first time, I feel Gabe’s firm chest push slightly against my back. A light shiver runs down my spine and the hair on my nape stands.

“Sorry, but he’s taken for tonight.” Gabe’s possessive words come out more like a threat than an apology.

The cowboy doesn’t desist though. Money and power can make anybody cocky. “I’ll let the cute angel decide,” he replies, lowering his eyes on me.

Angel? I giggle lightly, despite not understanding the stiffening of Gabe’s body against mine. He knows very well I’m no angel. I contemplate for a second screwing with him and following the cowboy to the carmine room. But I rapidly push the thought away. I can more easily fuck with him near me.

“The carmine room will have to wait for next time,” I say. The cowboy tightens his lips but nods in understanding. He grabs my hand to place a light kiss on the back before leaving. Maybe I should reconsider the anything-goes buffet because if all older guys are this classy, I could be on board.

Gabe moves his body away from me, taking the cowboy's place.

"Oh, hello, Gabe. Nice meeting you here. Fancy a drink?"

"I know you followed me here." I see no indicators of anger on his face. Maybe his features are frozen from lack of use. Does he ever move them?

"Whatever do you mean?" I lift my flute to my lips, but it's empty.

Gabe signals the bartender as he says, "Even astronauts in the space station could see you driving behind me like a lunatic."

"Three words for you: perfect driving record." I point at my chest as my eyes fall on the people surrounding us again. "Mmm, Mr. Hot Shot is staring at us." I smile at Gabe, pretending enjoyment.

"Who?"

"The slick guy you were talking to when that plastic wench was all over you," I remind him, a little too strongly.

His gaze turns intense for a few seconds, making me feel under a microscope. But then his fingers land on my shoulder and slowly trail down my arm, leaving a tingling sensation behind until they linger on the back of my hand, brushing the skin lightly, feeling like a hot brand.

"Just go with it. Philip Bailey is the owner of Crimson, and he needs to believe I found the person I want to take into one of the private rooms."

It's all an act. Of course, I knew it. "So charming, how can I resist?" I pat his chest, enjoying the hardness hidden by his clothes for a moment. Who would have thought. "I don't want to seem too easy. I'm going to need one more glass."

Gabe's inscrutable eyes are on me again, looking darker than usual, when Caterpillar Brows places two flutes in front of us. I wink at him in thanks.

"Pretend to drink it," he whispers cryptically.

I do need to remain sober, but I think his cautious suggestion is connected to the drug that Rague told me about. Oh fuck, is it mixed with the alcohol? I already drank one glass. That metallic taste at the end...is it normal for

champagne, or was it the drug? Damn! My mind is firing with dozens of hypotheses crowding my increasingly panicky self.

Fear must show on my face because Gabe grabs my hand. His sympathy is quite shocking. His touch grounds me as my eyes find his again.

“I drank a glass,” I tell him.

He nods. “Maybe it wasn’t spiked. We don’t know how the other victims were dosed.”

“But mixing the drug with the drinks seems like the most likely method,” I interject.

The unfriendly patterned lady at the entrance encouraged me to drink the champagne, and the bartender told me someone would *secure* me soon enough when he gave me the glass. Why did I drink? I’m the lamest James Bond ever. The thought that the champagne could have been spiked didn’t even enter my head. I mean, I’m surrounded by people. Doing it so openly would be a bit risky. Nevertheless, this is a very private sex club. I have no doubt that whatever happens here, stays here.

“And if it was spiked?” I ask him in a low, nervous voice. Rague said that the victims who were dosed felt an arousal so powerful, it turned into pain and only feeling pleasure could stop it. “Do you have any sedatives on you?”

“No. But I’m here.” Is he suggesting, what I think he’s suggesting?

His calm statement strangely soothes my distress. His usual indifference toward me irritates me, but I know deep down that Gabe—like all his brothers—would help me. This situation is peculiar, though and if indeed I took that drug, I’m going to need him to...take care of me. My balls tingle at the thought. Would he do it with his mouth? My eyes lift on his perfectly proportioned lips, then drop on his long, strong fingers. With his hands? Dick? I halt my gaze before it lowers further down.

“Would you...?” I can’t finish the sentence. Am I really asking him for help?

I don't feel any different, perhaps I didn't ingest the drug. Although, I don't know how long it'd take for it to affect me. But would Gabe go all the way if it does? Isn't he straight? I've never seen him with a bloke, or a woman either. Would he feel forced? No, I'm a looker. Too gorgeous not to tempt even the straightest arrow.

Would I really want him to help me, though? I've always been attracted to him. He's a bloody wet dream. His cold demeanor and dismissiveness are the repellants that kept me at a distance—disliking him.

“Would you want me to?” he echoes my thoughts.

I search his beautiful, cavernous eyes, then study his light eyelashes and arched eyebrows, down to his soft-looking lips and short blond beard. His hand is steady around mine, and his scent divine.

I feel like this is somehow a pivotal moment in my life. Would I want Gabriel Reed, my icy boss, Ollie's brother-in-law to fuck me?

Lord, yeah, I would.

I nod at him, but his eyes are on Mr. Hot Shot tilting his glass at him. He does the same, taking a small sip from his. Did Gabe see my silent nod of consent?

I take a big breath and shake my curls in a Gilda-like move. Sadly, I've been in a worse predicament than this in the past, and just like that time, I feel like I've bitten off more than I can chew.

“You put the pain in champagne. Drink. This is the good stuff,” I raise my voice, hoping my performance is well heard.

Gabe leaves the flute on the counter and leans down until his breath is brushing over my ear. His hand moves to my knee—my naked knee. His long fingers slide under my skirt caressing my skin and unleashing a delicious sensation all over my limb.

“Put your hands on my shoulders, Little Wasp, and show the people in this room how much you want me to fuck you.”

Sodding. Hell.

Here is that gruff, raspy voice coming from Gabe again. My mouth turns slack while my dick gives an eager twitch.

Little Wasp? Is he taking the piss? A sassy reply is on the tip of my tongue when a sudden, oddly warm sensation spreads inside my belly. It quickly crawls down, turning my insides into a blazing fire. A whimper slips out of my lips as my fingers squeeze his shoulder hard.

“What is it?” Is that worry in Gabe’s voice? So very improbable. My dick quickly grows hard as steel and a sharp pain hits my balls, making me grit my teeth.

The drug?

My heart hammers, and sharp bolts start striking my skull at random. The sizzling fire continues ripping through my body. And it doesn’t feel like it is going to simmer down.

“Little Wasp?” The nickname on his lips sounds like silky honey now.

“There’s something wrong.” I pause to take a few deep, cleansing breaths of air. I can’t rein in my racing heart. Something throbs deep inside of me between my navel and my hips, down to my balls. It feels like melting lava, swirling and leaving me somehow achingly empty.

“Wrong how?”

“I don’t know. It burns.” I bite my lower lip against another stab of pain, and I feel pre-cum leaking from my stiff cock. Gabe’s face is right over mine, and his delicious scent is engulfing me, making me shake with... desire. A desire so powerful, I feel lightheaded. My prostate quivers, and I know that if he touches me, it will turn into an earthquake.

“You’re so good-looking it makes me sick,” I blurt out. *What the fuck?* It’s like my body and my brain have gone rogue. I have no control over them whatsoever. But it’s true, I always thought he was handsome. I’ve even had dirty dreams about him.

“You did?” he asks in a dark whisper. Sodding hell! Did I just say those last words out loud?

A yes slips out of my mouth. “I’ve always been attracted to you.” Lord Almighty, I can’t believe I’m confessing my attraction to Gabe! I can’t stop my mouth from spewing shitty truths.

I feel so needy. My body is demanding. I try to force myself to be still, but what I really want to do is spread my legs, arch my back, and ease the aching sensation by opening myself up. My empty hole is clenching around nothing, and rubbing my butt against the leather cushion of the stool doesn’t help the wanton lust.

My lips tingle as I keep staring at Gabe’s. Ugh. I’m a kiss slut. The tongue twisting, the taste savoring, the wet, dirty sounds. Love it all. If Gabe’s dick is just as masculine and as perfect as his mouth... Okay! It’s clear this drug is turning me mental.

“Look at me,” he orders, his hand tilting my chin up, and the light touch makes my whole body still, pushing the ache away and replacing it with toe-curling pleasure. I oblige him without even the slightest disagreement. I’ll do whatever he says if he just keeps putting his hands on me.

“Your pupils are blown. You’re panting and perspiring. You were drugged.” I’m twisting on the stool mindlessly again, trying to get closer to him when his words register.

I gasp at the confirmation, unable to stop my hips from moving. I’m still trying to keep my body in check, and the effort has sweat breaking out on my hairline and beads rolling down my spine. I whimper as another spasm hits, this one right behind my balls, a piercing twist of heat and pain. My grip on Gabe goes so tight, my knuckles turn white. I gasp, pushing my forehead into his shoulder. The feel of him makes me moan, my balls draw up, and my pucker tightens.

My hands by their own volition move to his hips, yanking him flush against me.

“I’m sorry.” My apology is drowned out by the indescribable rush of delight flooding through my body at the feel of him, warm and hard and male, and all I can do is dig my fingers deeper into his hips. My leg moves up, wrapping around him, pushing him even closer to me. I can’t stop. I crave this. It’s like something primal ripped to the surface and took me over.

Gabe said he would help me. I hope he'll keep his word. Because I really fucking need him.

My balls, which were aching a minute ago like I needed to rub one out, are now boiling, ready to explode. I feel a twinge of pain at my entrance, and the urge to be filled and stretched to the limit drives my hips to move against something deliciously hard and invitingly long. It's a cock. I'm rubbing against Gabe's meaty cock. Yes!

"I...I..." I don't care where I am or who I am with, I just want, I need... "Please. Oh, please."

I'd make a deal with Mephistopheles if I could.

"It's okay, Little Wasp. Take what you want." Holy hell, that dark, sexy whisper turns my blood into hellfire. The feeling is so powerful, so damn overwhelming like never before that my head falls back as I start humping him. The deep, low, hot-as-fuck grunt coming from Gabe makes me up my tempo. My dick is dripping so much pre-cum, my jockstrap is drenched with it, and that's when a cannon ball of pleasure shoots into the core of my body, and my mouth drops open in a silent, orgasmic scream.

"Just like that." Gabe's hoarse voice reaches my foggy brain as my body is still jerking in unmeasurable bliss, just before another manly voice cuts him off.

"I see something interesting is going on here, But I have to ask you to move to one of the shade rooms."

"Mr. Bailey." Gabe's voice is again dripping with its usual icy frosting. There's no trace of fire anymore. I can feel his stiffening body trembling under mine.

"Follow me."

The excruciating pain is gone, but I can sense it lingering under the surface. It's not over yet.

I'm still panting and sweaty, feeling the dreadful sticky sensation inside my jockstrap when I'm lifted up. My legs automatically hook around Gabe's muscular body; the smell of his cologne is in my nose as I nuzzle his neck.

His hands lower to my butt, getting a handful of each cheek, while my arms remain limp at my sides. Fuck, Gabe can grope me as much as he wants if he promises me another explosive orgasm.

I'm mad horny.

It's not the first time I came in a club in front of people—anything can happen on a dance floor, if you catch my drift. But Gabe didn't even touch me, and I want more. Always had a high sex drive, but this feels more like a skunk reflex. This drug is seriously dangerous. And we need to stop it, as soon as I turn sane again.

"It will be okay," he whispers in my ear. His assertive tone makes my whole body almost explode with lust.

"Promise?" I hate to hear the fear in my own voice.

"Promise." I can feel his steely resolve behind that one word.

He stops, and I lift my head to turn my eyes in the new dim room. It looks like a boudoir sex room. The walls are almost black with a dark jewel tone. There's an elegant, huge bed covered in silky red sheets, two curvaceous armchairs that give off sensual vibes, and a wide mirror in a gold frame. I can't continue looking around, as the pain that I'd hoped had been extinguished by the strongest orgasm of my life hits me again, making me almost fall from Gabe's arms as I jerk uncontrollably.

He places me on cold sheets, leaving me horribly alone again, and the burning lava sensation punches me like a waterfall, running its way through my legs, my arms, chest, and groin. My cock is agonizingly hard again. I'm vibrating, trembling with torment. The overload of torture freezes my body in an arc, head thrown back. I'm wailing as the pain keeps running up and down all over my body.

My hand goes under my skirt, and I start beating my cock like a madman. It's the only thing that assuages the agony I'm feeling. Lust overcomes it, and I pull on my balls, trying desperately to come. And I do. My body spasms with ecstasy it spreads like wildfire reaching every single part of me, while my hole begs to be filled by a cock. Gabe's cock?

I'm going to die tonight. I'm sure of it. Death by pleasure.

The last sane thought that invades my head is that it will be with Gabriel Reed.

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three

GABRIEL/BEZALIEL



Bez, you need to keep it together, I try to reason with him.

I had to leave my phone at the entrance of the club—something Rami didn’t know about—and I have no way to contact my brothers. They know where I am thanks to the tracker I have under my skin behind my ear, but they don’t know what is happening at the moment. I need to find a way to get Lori out of here, without putting him in harm’s way. Which means I need some time.

Something Bez is clearly not agreeing with.

Fuck that, Gabe! Look what this motherfucker did to my Little Wasp. He’s in pain, and the asshole is fucking enjoying it!

Bailey is standing near me with a devilish smile on his face, eyes on Lori’s writhing body on the bed.

You can’t punch your way out of this, Bez. Security is spread out all over the club. They’ll stop us, and Lori won’t have anybody to protect him in his weakened state.

Fuck! Fuck! Fuuuuck! Bez growls inside my head.

Let me handle this.

I let you take over again, didn’t I?

“You don’t seem interested in what I gave you on a silver platter.” Bailey is looking at me with calculating eyes. “Not yet anyway.”

“Not yet?” I send a quick glance at the door. It’s made of thick wood, I can’t shoulder my way through, and it will take too long to pick the lock.

“The drug that he took,” Bailey points at Lori, his amber eyes hazy and filled with pain, “you drank it as well, Mr. Reed. But I’m impressed by the way your body is resisting it. Soon though, you’ll be as uninhibited and as horny as a dog in heat. And you’ll give a spectacular show to some of our guests.”

He glances at the large mirror occupying most of the wall to my left. It must be a two-way mirror like the one in the interrogation rooms in police stations. There are also two cameras mounted on the ceiling that I can see, maybe more.

Kill him! Or I’ll do it. That surprises me. Bez hasn’t killed in a long time—brawling is more his thing. I’m the one to take care of donors.

Not now, Bez. There are probably people behind that mirror already; they’ll alert security. You know the drug won’t have any effect on us. We can protect Lori.

“Why me?” I ask Bailey. “Is this a new member initiation?”

“Sort of. It could ruin your impeccable, arrogant reputation if a video of the imperturbable Gabriel Reed, out of his mind with lust and wildly nailing a screaming twink in a sex club, were to hit the internet.” He gives me an evil smile, which, as the seconds pass by, falls slightly when I don’t respond in any way to his useless threat.

So, this is how he got his enterprise going and secured his clients. He blackmails them, at least the most important ones, by taking videos of them with their pants down. Phil Bailey just got a place on my donor list—first place.

Bez’s angry growl slips out, making Bailey back up one step.

A “fuck you” and then a moan rise from the bed, turning my attention to Lori again. His face is red, curls drenched in sweat, eyes firing at Bailey.

He's on his side, both of his hands are under his black skirt, which has risen a little, showing part of his bare butt cheeks, but nothing more. He's clearly jerking himself off and more under the black leather.

His lower lip is bleeding, as he's biting into it repeatedly, his body is trembling with lust. My dick perks up once again, not at Lori's painful state, but the way he's trying to fight it. His body is controlled by the drug, but his mind is still trying to stop this. He's muffling his whimpers and moans while trying not to give those fuckers the show Bailey promised.

Little Wasp has spunk, Bez rumbles. I'll take care of this. Of him.

Bez, you can't fuck him, I try to reason with him.

He gave us the green light, Bez reminds me.

“You can’t resist, twink.” Bailey’s words toward Lori bring me back to the room. “It’s a losing battle. It’ll only get worse unless you satisfy your lust. Sexual pleasure will halt the pain. Just ride the wave and enjoy the fucking. You want that don’t you? To be fucked?”

“Yes, you wanker!” Lori breathes angrily out, as a moan leaves his mouth.

Damn, that's hot, Bez says.

And I'd agree with him if the situation wasn't so wrong.

“Pity that you chose him. I'd have enjoyed to abuse that round ass.” Bailey’s eyes slide all over Lori. “If you aren’t in the *mood* yet, I’d be glad to give those slutty lips a ride.”

This time, I'm the one replying, “No!”

“I guess the drug is starting to work, then,” he sneers. I'll enjoy immensely turning him into a strainer.

I'll yank his insides out, Bez hisses.

“The lube and condoms are on that table. You'll be too far gone to care in a few minutes,” he warns me, moving to the door. He lingers with his hand on the knob to add, “I'll be watching. Make it good for the other members, or the video goes live.”

As soon as the door closes, I toss my jacket on the bed, grab the lube, and move toward Lori, letting Bez take over, but still alertly observing.

Finally!

Grab his boots and move him so that when you lie down on your side, your body is covering him from the two-way mirror, Gabe says.

I do as he says and also drape the sheets as best I can on top of him.

We can't do anything about the cameras, Gabe states, but I'm too taken by the sexy sight on the bed.

Little Wasp is going at it like a crazed animal, his hips pumping, riding his fingers, and fucking his hand fast and hard, just how I like it.

Sweat sticks his curls together, pushing them on one side. He's in pain but is stupidly trying to endure it. A tear slides down his face, and the effect is...devastatingly hot.

"Tell me where it hurts, Little Wasp," I growl.

He opens his watery eyes as more tears roll down. "Everywhere!"

"The motherfucker was right, stop struggling." He whimpers at my words but continues to hold my gaze for a long moment. And then he takes a deep breath and nods.

"Come on, we're waiting." The motherfucker's voice booms inside the room.

I turn my head back toward the two-way mirror and give it a death stare. "Enjoy your last hours on this earth, Bailey."

Scornful snickers follow my threat.

Gabe is a cold fucker when he ends someone, while I'm a burning nova and I'll turn those peeping assholes into piss and blood. Because nobody forces me to do something and lives to tell the tale—however enjoyable those things might be.

"Oh fuck!" Lori suddenly screams. "It hurts so bad, I can't. I can't by myself anymore," he cries. "Help me. I need, I need..."

“I’ll give you what you need.” I lower my hand to my pants and unzip them, taking my rock-hard cock out of my boxer briefs. I open the lube bottle and pour some on it, letting it roll down my shaft.

You can’t fuck him! Gabe’s flat voice resounds inside my head.

You’re a fool, controlling yourself all this time, Gabe.

I haven’t.

Denial is Gabe’s favorite game, that’s one of the reasons I exist—at least that’s what Meg, his foster mother and shrink, says.

This is wrong, he adds.

He asked us to help him.

Lori is struggling to push his weird red underwear down, and I tug hard on it, tearing it off him.

You can still help him, Bez, without penetration.

Shut up! God, he’s such a pain.

Don’t forget the people watching. Protect Lori.

How can I forget those fucking perverts?

Little Wasp is moaning as he frantically humps my thigh, and I grab a handful of juicy, soft ass and squeeze while I shift him so that his dick is stroking over mine. I grab both—his is wet with cum—and start beating us off. And fuck, it feels so damn good.

“Yes! Please. I’m prepped, put it inside me.” He talks like a bitch in heat while he licks my neck. His hot tongue leaves a wet path around my lobe before pulling the sensitive flesh inside that sinful mouth. Then he bites down hard as he shoots cum over my hand, our dicks, and his skirt. He keeps whimpering with his teeth still digging into my skin.

Such a horny little thing. He sets my fucking blood on fire. I’ve been wanting to fuck him from the first time I saw him. To fill the warmth of those cock-sucking lips and come down his throat. And now I finally can... Damn Gabe!

My Little Wasp's delicate arm is around my head, hand tightly gripping my hair, as the other is still pumping his fingers inside his ass.

“You taste so bloody good!” I can barely understand his words while his mouth is sucking my neck. His hips haven’t stopped moving, and the eager way he’s fucking into my hand, stroking against my cock, gives life to the perfect friction that will soon make me come.

“Want me to fill you?” I grunt, as my balls keep slapping against his. His ass cheek feels plump and meaty in my hand, I can’t stop molding it. His curls are soft and damp against my cheek as he nods his head yes, like a bobblehead doll. He quickly pulls his fingers out and grips the bedsheet in a white-knuckled fist.

“Say it,” I order him.

Gabe sniffs at me disapprovingly.

I’m taking advantage of the situation because that’s what I always do. And I’m not fucking hurting anybody—will only give it to him good.

Gabe doesn’t respond, but I know he likes this, even though he denies it.

I find Lori’s nipple over his shirt and slightly pull, making him arch his body toward me and let out a slutty noise I want to hear again with my cock stuffing his mouth.

I thrust my dick up, rubbing it against his still hard one, and he practically yells, “I want your cock! All of it. Give it to me! Please!”

“You beg so pretty,” I growl as I press three fingers inside his slick hole, past the first bit of resistance.

Lori moans loudly, “Ahh! Oh! Oh fuck! Fuuu-f-f-fuuuck m-me! Gabe! Gabeee—”

I know you like him calling your name, Gabe. I’ll let it go this time. Enjoy it, you fucker! I tell him, and he still refuses to talk. It doesn’t matter. Because Little Wasp’s walls are snug as hell around my fingers, I give them a hard thrust, and I’m all in.

Emboldened by his muffled whimpers, I add a fourth. That earns me another bite on my neck and a frantic motion of his hips, bouncing his plush ass so prettily and obscenely, fucking himself down onto my hand. With four fingers in, he's tight as a vise, but with no resistance at all. This is what I'm talking about.

I up the tempo of my hand around our cocks as I hear the slap, slap, slap sound of my palm hitting his slick ass every time I pump my fingers inside him.

“Squeeze that wet hole around my fingers, just like that. Fuck them harder. Take them all in.” He’s good at following my orders and has a dirty mouth, too. I knew he’d be a fantastic fuck.

“So full. Give it to me rough. Ahhh, I want you deeper.”

I don’t like those fuckers behind the mirror beating one off, hearing his moans; they’re for me only. Mine. I grab a handful of his curls and push his head firmly against my shoulder. He responds straight away, biting me like a little vampire.

“You’re stroking that pretty cock against mine so good. That’s it. So fucking good,” I growl low as his fuckable lips latch onto my skin. His restless tongue is tasting me like I’m his favorite meal. Just imagining it relentless, wet, and hot on my dick makes my balls draw up.

“Come for me.” An order, not a request. One he’s helpless to obey. He fucks himself back and forth two more times, and then falls apart so beautifully uninhibited in my arms. His scream of pleasure and pain is the hottest thing I’ve ever heard. More tears fall down his face, and I lick some of them away, enjoying the salty taste mixed with lilies.

His little nails suddenly dig into my back under my shirt, and I can’t hold back anymore. The orgasm rips through me, and I spill hot cum all over our cocks. I continue pumping until the last drop shoots out.

Still nothing to say, Gabe? I didn’t fuck him.

Stubborn dick. Like I cannot hear his thoughts.

My Little Wasp is still trembling when I'm done. But judging by the small smile on his lips, the pain has subsided again. His dick is still hard, and as I pull my fingers out of him, he whimpers and opens his eyes. They're hazy, but I don't see any trace of lust, only deep, post-orgasmic satisfaction.

He sighs, and then whispers a small, "Thank you," before lowering his eyelids and falling asleep. He must be exhausted after all the orgasms he's had.

My job here is done, but if Bailey comes near us again, I'll pound his face, I tell Gabe as I push back to let the silent dick come back out.

We need to get out of here, I tell Bez.

I quickly slide my cock back into my boxer briefs, and I'm wiping my hands on the silk sheet when my eyes fall on Lori.

He looks peaceful with his hand tucked under his cheek—and totally debauched. The sheet is covering him partially, but I can see his skirt bunched around his waist, revealing the enticing curve of his round backside and his pink, still clearly hard dick lying on the bed in a pool of our combined cum. The skin between his thighs is shiny with jizz. Bez's jizz.

When Bez has his sexual encounters, I do like to watch, but I've never felt like I wanted to be part of them. Like I wanted to share the experience with him.

A beeping sound suddenly pierces the air. The fire alarm.

I grab my jacket from the foot of the bed and place it over Lori's body after sliding my combat knife out of the hidden back pocket. I hear some commotion coming from outside the room, and then a heavy thump as the door bangs open. I instinctively move in front of Lori, blade ready in my hand. But Rague's huge bulk appears, followed by Ollie and Uri.

"Lori!" Ollie's scream rises over the loud beeping, and in the next second he's moving to get to him.

"He's asleep," I explain. Ollie looks frantic as he drops his own knife on the bed and lifts my jacket to discover Lori's level of undress.

“What the fuck happened to him?” he hisses, covering his friend once again.

“He was dosed. I took care of him,” I simply state. Uri sends me an intense stare, while Ollie looks shocked by my words.

“He’s breathing, Kitty,” Rague tries to reassure his husband, placing a hand on his shoulder while sheathing the axe in the other on his side.

Uri is holding a gun in each hand and nods at me with understanding, making his long dreads wave with the movement. He exits the room, followed by Rague, who quickly comes back with a blanket in his hand.

“We need to go. They’ll soon realize there’s no fire,” Rague states. Which means my brothers pulled the fire alarm lever to give us enough time to leave.

“They took our phones at the entrance. Call Rami, he needs to get a hold of the video they took of me and Lori,” I tell Rague, taking the blanket from his hand.

“Video?” Uri asks, remaining at the threshold with his guns ready.

“The owner, Philip Bailey, wanted to blackmail me with a sex tape after he spiked our drinks.”

“Fuck!” Rague cusses, stroking his bearded chin while he holds his phone near his ear.

Ollie helps me wrap the blanket around Lori’s limp body. “Rague, you need to carry Lori,” he tells his husband.

Nobody will touch him. The thought forms quickly inside my head as the words come out of my mouth before I can even form them in my head. “I’ll do it.” I hand Ollie my blade and slide both arms under Lori’s body, lifting him easily into my hold. He nuzzles his face against my chest while taking a long, contented breath, but doesn’t open his eyes. Ollie looks quizzically at his friend and then me, but doesn’t say anything.

Rague is still on the phone with Rami, explaining to him what he needs to do; Uri is covering the door. My holding Lori is just a practical decision

since we need to get moving.

Riiight. I ignore Bez's sarcastic drawl.

After a few more seconds, with Uri in the lead and Ollie and Rague in the back, we walk out. I look through the open door inside the next room. I can see the other side of the two-way mirror displaying the red bed covered in mine and Lori's cum. A long sofa, three chairs—one tipped over on the floor—are facing the glass wall, and a table filled with lube and self-pleasure toys—some clearly used—is in the corner near a bar.

"There's no recording device in here. They must have it in another room," Uri states. "A gallery room is normal in a sex club."

"What the fuck?" I hear Rague growl as he understands the meaning of Uri's words.

"Bailey chose the room for us," I say. "He wanted to give some other clients a show."

"He's a dead man walking! When Lori wakes up, he'll cut his balls off and give them to Wednesday for lunch!" Ollie adds with a fury in his voice I've never heard before.

Wednesday?

My Little Wasp couldn't have a friend without fire, Bez chuckles.

Your *Little Wasp*? I'm confused by his possessive tone.

"Who's Wednesday?" Uri asks. But an angry shout coming from not so far away mutes my inner and the outer conversations.

Uri signals me with a wave of his hand, and I start following him again.

"Rami sent me the blueprint of the place. This way," my brother whispers. We enter a messy kitchen, passing by the multiple stainless steel stoves and the counters filled with half-cooked dishes and dirty pots. We cross a deserted staff-only locker room and exit through the back door.

The fresh air of the night welcomes us outside. Two waitresses are standing twenty feet away on the opposite sidewalk, too busy talking among

themselves as we hurriedly walk away.

Uri takes two steps away from us when Rague asks him where he's going. "Phones," is Uri's short reply, before he rounds the building.

"Hunter and Rami will be here soon to take care of the recording in case Serena can't hack their security. Michael is driving toward our place. He needs to check out both of you," Rague says as we reach his pickup.

"Lori needs to go to the hospital," I argue.

"No. Lori hates hospitals." Ollie opens the rear passenger door, and I slide inside, still holding Lori in my arms. Ollie opens his mouth with a frown on his face, but I cut off whatever he's about to say. "Keep Rague in check." My brother doesn't look particularly angry, but Ollie knows what happens when his husband loses it.

He gives me a long, studying stare with those green eyes, but then does what I say and climbs into the front passenger seat.

"Here." He hands me a sport drink after placing our knives in a black duffle bag. "You need to hydrate." I don't but I grab it and place it in the cup holder in case Lori wakes up thirsty.

"I didn't use my Molotov cocktail," I hear Rague grumble. He loves fire, so much that he wants to add a crematorium to the base to burn the donors' corpses instead of melting them inside acid as we usually do.

"Not using your cocktail is a good thing, Beastie, not a bad one," Ollie reminds his husband.

Rague starts the truck just as Uri opens the back door and slides in next to me. He waves a hand holding my cell phone and Lori's in the air. "Go!"

My brother doesn't make him say it twice and quickly drives us out of there.

"Everything went smooth?" Rague asks him.

"Bailey is gone. Heard the manager talking about it on the phone. I incapacitated the bouncer to get to the phones, but Thelma and Louise

didn't have their fun tonight." Uri pats his jacket pockets, grumbling unhappily about not using his girls—his guns.

Your brothers are idiots. Bez once again lets me know how much he dislikes my family.

Ollie's eyes keep checking on Lori through the rearview mirror. He's sleeping, his heart beating steadily under my hand. His slow breath feels warm against my white shirt-clad chest.

"I shouldn't have let him go inside the club!" Ollie suddenly hisses.

"Like you can stop Gremlin from doing anything," Uri snorts.

"Kitty, you tried. Lori is too stubborn to listen to anyone." Rague's large hand falls on his husband's much smaller one and starts caressing it.

"Then we should have gotten inside sooner! I can't believe we stopped to get you coffee, you dick!" Ollie turns to Uri.

My sociopathic brother shrugs. "Gremlin knew the score when he decided to enter the club. He was lucky Gabe helped him. Any of those shitheads could have had their turn with him."

"Fuck!" Ollie cries.

"Shut the fuck up, Uri!" Rague growls.

Isn't Ollie supposed to keep Rague calm? Bez sniffs.

"You know I'm right," Uri insists.

"Shut up!" Bez decides to interject. "You'll wake him up. And he needs sleep."

There's a moment of silence before a slow smirk appears on Uri's face.
"Oh, hello, Bezaliel. It's been a while."

Bez pulls back again. He rarely communicates with my foster family since he doesn't think much of them.

"Who's Bezaliel?" Ollie's watery voice sounds confused. "And why do you sound different?" he asks me.

Rague sends me a look through the rearview mirror before focusing on the road again.

I turn toward the window, not wanting to get into my multiplicity condition at the moment. Lori chooses that moment to shift in my lap, snuggling closer to me. I don't hate it as much as I thought I would.

"Bez is Gabe's other personality," Rague tries to clarify. It makes me sigh.

"His other what?" Ollie looks puzzled, and that's why I don't divulge the fact that I have an alter to people. Because I have to defend myself against a multitude of dull and incredibly personal questions. Not that I usually advertise Bez in any way.

"Gabe has another *tenant* living inside his head," Uri adds. He's always seen my multiplicity like a game—Rami as well. When we were kids, they used to take every opportunity to make me feel in danger to trigger the switch between me and Bez and make him come out. After years of therapy, my condition improved, and nowadays, we co-front with Bez mostly in the background. A few inner comments and a couple of quickies a month are all he needs...until recently.

I have a feeling I'm going to come out and play more in the future, Bez lets me know as my eyes fall on the head of messy, brown curls against my suit vest. My cock perks up following Bez's line of filthy thoughts. What does that mean?

Ollie is staring at me with a dumbfounded look. His mouth keeps opening and closing like he's not sure what to ask next. Then he unfortunately finds the words. "Are you a schizophrenic? Like that guy in that movie with the little girl inside of him?"

"Symptoms of Schizophrenia are delusion, hallucinations, disorganized speech, and trouble with thinking, not split personalities," Uri intervenes with a bored tone. "Most movies get it wrong."

"I'll explain it to you later, Kitty," Rague says. I'm not surprised my brother never told him. I don't like people to know. It bores me when they start treating me differently because of my multiplicity.

“Okay. Yeah. Sorry. Let’s focus on what happened. What did he go through inside that club, Gabe?” Ollie stares right at me, looking tense.

“I suspect they slipped the drug into our champagne flutes,” I say.

“So why are you all controlled-looking, while it seems like Lori went through a blender?” Ollie asks me, irritation filling his voice.

“More like he rode the blender,” Uri mumbles, then raises his voice. “Gabe is just being his unfazed, emotionless self. Bez on the other hand...”

I interrupt him and answer Ollie’s question. “He downed his glass of champagne, which I presume contained the drug, while I barely took a sip.”

“Did anyone else—” Ollie takes a big breath before continuing, “—touch him?”

I shake my head at him. His sigh is filled with relief, but his lips are still stretched in a long line. He takes a big breath, and then asks me, “You... did you and him...?”

Uri’s phone starts ringing, cutting Ollie off.

“It’s Sari,” he says with a frown before answering. “Are you okay? Are you sure? Yes. In the car. He’s sleeping. Where are you? No. Yes, I do. Fine.” Uri lets out the last word with an annoyed huff, then moves the phone away from his ear and pushes the speaker button.

“Gabe? How do you feel? Any sign that the drug is affecting you?” Sari’s worried voice fills the car.

“No,” I reply succinctly.

“Good. When you get to Rague’s, Michael will take a sample of your blood—it should still have traces of the drug—and he’ll inject Lori with a sedative. It’ll keep him under until the drug is mostly out of his system. Is he okay?”

“He seems fine. He was lucky Gabe was there.” Ollie grits his teeth and turns his head again toward the windshield.

“Yes, he was,” Sari agrees. He’s the sweetest among us brothers, but I’ve wondered a few times if he hides everything balled up inside. Because none of us exited unscathed from those torturous years of imprisonment.

“I changed my return flight. I’ll be back tonight.” Uri’s body tenses slightly with Sari’s statement.

“Odd you’re not with him,” Rague taunts Uri. Because where Sari goes, usually Uri follows. Even though something has changed lately between them. I don’t care enough to ask, though.

That makes two of us, Bez adds. *But I bet my Little Wasp would be all over it.*

Lori definitely would.

“Send me the flight number. I’ll pick you up,” Uri says.

“No need,” Sari answers quickly. Him saying no to Uri, that’s definitely new.

Uri taps the speaker off and starts a heated exchange with Sari, which halts the moment Lori’s loud moan resounds inside the car.

His eyes are squeezed shut, and his hands turn into fists gripping my vest and shirt. Lori is sharp sassiness and cutting sarcasm wrapped in a pretty package; I don’t like seeing him this defenseless and suffering. It strikes an odd chord inside me.

He’s writhing on my lap, stroking his hands over my chest, face nuzzling my pec.

“It hurts,” he cries.

“Lori!” Ollie calls him, but he doesn’t seem to hear.

“Fuck!” Rague cusses. “I shouldn’t have used all the tranquilizer on Gabe’s donor this afternoon! We could have given some to Lori.” We usually use it on the donors to keep them docile as we take them to the base.

“Rague did a great job on your donor, though,” Uri lets me know. I’m glad to hear that.

Lori's scream of pain fills the car, and he abruptly arches his body toward the cabin's ceiling, looking like he's been electrocuted.

"Oh, God! He..." Ollie doesn't finish the sentence as his eyes follow Lori's hand sliding under the blanket and starting to move.

"Pull into that parking garage and drive to the roof," Uri orders Rague, not looking bothered in the least. "He needs to be fucked. Are you up for it?" he then asks me.

"Jesus!" Ollie curses, looking uneasily at me and then Lori. "Maybe I should—"

Rague cuts him off with a low growl. "No fucking way."

"Lori needs a friend to take care of him not...his boss," Ollie argues.

Rague grabs his neck and pulls him closer to him. "Nobody touches you, Kitty. No one but me. Don't you forget who you belong to."

Lori moans as his hand finds its way under my shirt to my bare skin. His lips are on my neck once again, letting out sexy sounds. The wiggling of his ass has turned my cock into stone, and Bez is unusually quiet.

"He doesn't need a friend, just a dick to bounce on. And Gabe is a real dick." Uri's crass words earn a snarky reply from Ollie and they start arguing.

Bez?

Too tired. You need to take this one, Gabe.

Tired? The same guy that fucked two men until dawn in that dingy motel room only two months ago?

"If you don't, I will." Uri's clipped voice suddenly brings me back to them. The idea of his hands on Lori makes the itching sensation come back all over my body. When did it stop?

"You and Uri are the single ones here," Rague states, with Ollie sitting on his lap. "And you can definitely get it up for him."

I've never held very tightly to the idea that I'm straight. I've never cared much about labels. Never wasted the time to think about it. But I also never really noticed a guy's ass before. Then Lori entered my life and wiggled his on my lap, and now my dick is taking notice.

"Of course he can," Uri states. Then he sighs when I don't say anything. "Give him to me."

He's outstretching his arms toward a wiggling Lori when I bark, "Get. Out!"

Uri smirks smugly at me, but nods and gets out. "I saw a Starbucks on the other side of the road, I'll keep an eye on this place through Serena." He points at the camera on the wall on the left. "Call when you're done." He tosses my phone on the seat near me and closes the car door.

"Please...take care of him." Ollie turns a pleading look at me before Rague pulls him out of the car.

As soon I hear the click of the door, Lori cries, "I de-serve th-this. I deserve it." He whimpers miserably as tears roll down his face. The makeup smeared on his face trails down his cheeks in black and green streaks.

I don't know what he's talking about, I could ask him but instead I say, "Take the pain away, Lori."

I've never seen anyone move so fast. Between one blink and another, he throws the blanket, my jacket, and his shirt off him and shifts to climb on my lap, straddling me gorgeously naked except for his skirt all bunched up around his waist. His mouth latches onto my neck as he starts humping me, shoving his hips against me, his bare, dripping cock stabbing my stomach as he rides my thigh. His hands roam all over me, tearing at my clothes, ripping buttons, ruining expensive fabrics, until he can touch my bare skin. And damn, it feels good.

"You're so bloody perfect." His cloudy eyes zero in on my defined pecs and the light blond hair covering them. His arms wrap around my neck, and then he starts rubbing our chests together. It's like he's trying to squirm even closer to me, which isn't possible.

I grab his hips while I attempt to keep my head clear, but find it difficult with such an eager partner moaning so desperately against me.

Stop fighting it, Gabe. Let go and damn enjoy it, Bez suddenly tells me, moving my hands on Lori's ass, clutching it in a possessive grasp. Damn, I hate when he moves me like a puppet, but Lori's butt cheeks feel so soft and plump under my palms. I squeeze them a little harder, liking Lori's increasing moans.

"Yes! Gabe. Cock. Want your cock. I'll sit on it and take it all inside me." His fingers fumble with my pants. He unzips them, and then takes my hard shaft out.

He looks absolutely intoxicated as he licks his palm and starts jerking me off. Damn, his hands are small, but soft and skilled. A low grunt slips out of my mouth as his hips continue jerking and seeking friction.

"Such a beautiful cock," he mumbles deliriously. "Want you to fuck my face with it, fill my hole with your cum, spread it all over me."

Bez growls, or maybe I do, because, fuck, Lori is pushing all the right buttons.

He suddenly stops, lifts his hips up, and spits on my cockhead as he lines it up with his entrance.

"Lori, wait. I can use my fingers—" He doesn't let me finish and drops himself hard onto my cock.

"Fuuuuck," he screams, head thrown back, hard nipples pointing at me, and dick spurting cum all over my stomach. "Yes! Yes. Yeeeess." He's coming from only the feel of my length inside him. This drug is more potent than I thought. And although I know it's wrong, I can't stop feeling so damn aroused by the sight of Lori orgasming around me, squeezing his walls, strangling my bare cock in a vise.

Bare. No condom.

Yep, too late now! It feels fucking amazing, Bez growls.

I've never had sex without one, and always convinced Bez to use protection. But barebacking does feel damn incredible.

Lori is limp in my arms, but I can feel him still hard against my belly. His tiny, warm body feels good on top of mine.

I grit my teeth, breathing shallowly against the tight pressure around my shaft. But he took me inside so easily. Bez's fingers did that, molded a space inside Lori that was meant for my cock to fill. For me.

"You're in. All the way in. Deep. I'm full of your dick." Lori's words sound slurred and hot against my neck. He's twisting his hips like he's trying to get me even deeper. Then he rises on his knees until only my cockhead is in and slams down, taking all of it.

Fuuuck! It feels amazing, like never before. And he does it again. And again. And again.

I use my grip on his butt cheeks to hold on while I start fucking upward into him.

"I want to savor you until I get to the center of you," he says mindlessly, lapping at my neck like he's drunk on the taste of my skin.

"Lori," I breathe out, tightening my grip.

"Gabe! Do me harder." His eyes roll back in his head as he ups the tempo to a frenetic one, and I groan. I can't stop groaning as he rides me like a cock addict. His hands lift from around my neck and above his head to the car ceiling. He pushes his palms against it to give his bouncing ass more speed.

"Gabe! I'm so stretched, it stings so good." Moans and cries continue to flow out of him, and my eyes can't stop sliding over his slender, hairless body—the golden smooth skin, the small, pink nipples hard as diamonds. I move, and my mouth closes on one, sucking the tight bud between my lips. He tastes like lilies all over.

He shifts slightly again, gasping at the movements our bodies are making. "Right there!" He moans, hammering his hips up and down, using my dick to hit that spot inside him. "Love your dick. It's so long."

His cock is begging for a touch, all red and leaking profusely. His hand wraps around it, and he starts beating it off with desperation.

Each sound of our skin connecting, each noise he makes, fuels the next push, the next thrust. I need to come even though my instinct is to get more of this wild pleasure.

Like he's reading my mind, he tells me, "Come inside me, stuff me with all that hot jizz."

I can clearly see the obscene pleasure he's feeling on his face, it makes my body burn with more desire. Especially when another orgasm overwhelms him, and his pucker starts convulsing around me, milking me for all I've got. My balls draw up as a burst of pleasure zings through me, reaching my shooting dick. But I can't release inside him. Not when I'm not sure if he really wants it or it's just the drug talking. I grab his hips with the intentions of pulling out, but Lori anchors his thighs around me, hips pushing firmly down my lap. His grip on my shoulders turns bruising as he squeezes my cock in a strangling vise pushing me all the way in, deep, deeper into his body. It feels like fucking heaven. I can't fight it, I don't want to and with a long groan I pour all my ecstasy inside him. Rope after rope of thick, warm cum fill him.

Damn, is all Bez says, and it actually describes the moment perfectly.

My hands move to his thighs, and I let my head fall back on the headrest. My cock is still jerking inside his clenching channel as Lori makes slow, enticing circles with his body. The drug has made him so damn insatiable.

"Mmm," he lets out a satisfied noise. His mouth is at it again, slicking the skin on my shoulder, sinking those small, sharp teeth in. I groan at the sting, liking it a little too much. His hands find their way under my half-open shirt, scratching my back with those little nails. My cock is still hard inside him, which could indicate that the drug had some kind of effect on my body as well, keeping me ready for another round.

Lori pulls back his flushed face, a small smile on his big, puffed lips. Looking straight into my eyes with his ash brown ones, he slurs, "I've only ever felt at ease with three people in my life: Ollie, Sully-doo, and my... gran. And now, you blokes. You make me believe I have a place where I can

be...without feeling the fire of hell reaching for my feet for what I've done." He ends in a whisper.

I have to tell Rami that the drug doesn't only cause pain and exponentially increase people's sex drive, but also loosens their tongues.

"What have you done, Lori?" In his mind, it's something bad since he talked about hellfire. Whatever it is, it must be the reason why he accepted our vigilante justice so easily.

Lori lowers his head, and his messy caramel curls fall into his eyes, hiding his open gaze to me. A lonely tear falls down his cheek, and he wipes it away with his fingers as he shakes his head. I realize my hands are stroking his legs with slow circular movements when his fingers lace with mine. Huh. Touching him, being touched by him...I don't dislike it.

He lifts his head again, his gaze is glazed, his teeth are digging into that dip on his lower lip, and his hips are lifting again. His eyes don't leave mine as he rides me, slowly this time, like he's savoring me inside of him.

This feels different. More intimate, and I don't do intimate. His pupils are still blown, and I can see he's trying to drown the pain with pleasure, but he looks more aware. Of me. His nails suddenly sink into my pecs, and I push his thighs further apart and start fucking into him, earning a long moan. My cock is sliding so damn perfectly through his tight, wet opening, drenched with my cum. The thought makes me speed up. The loud slurping sounds his pucker is making around me are so fucking hot. My gaze focuses on the mole on his upper lip, and I feel the urge to lick it.

Do it, Bez orders me.

I suddenly tighten my grip on his thighs and urge Lori off me. He loses his balance and ends up on his side on the car seat, crying out his disappointment. I turn him on his stomach and lift his hips, then position myself behind him, near the curve of his ass. He pushes his face into the leather seat and brings his arms back, parting his cheeks with his hands, revealing that pink, cum-slicked, gaping place between. It's a filthy sight, and I've never felt more turned on in my life.

My cockhead pushes against the soft, dripping entrance and slides inside, so fucking beautifully. The puckered ring surrenders to the pressure and stretches around me until I'm fully sheathed again.

Nothing in the world has ever felt this good. Looked this good. Been this good.

Lori lets out a soft, pained little whimper, and all I can think about is how to induce that sound again. A roll of my hips and a hard thrust, and there it is again slipping from his lips. Roll, thrust, whimper. Roll, thrust, whimper. My balls are full and heavy again, and I haven't even given him a proper fuck.

I quickly slide off my vest and shirt, and then, gripping his waist, I start pounding into him.

"Gabe! God, yessss. Take me. Use me. Ahhhh. Give me that big, long cock. Fuck my ass," he cries, bucking his hips back toward me, falling in perfect sync with me.

I drop over his body, catching myself on one hand, and my nose dives into his soft hair, getting a lungful of sweet lilies and Lori's more intimate scent. This need to be near him is odd, but now is not the time to analyze it.

I pull out and shush his desperate moan by ramming forward, sending my cock back deep inside him. My balls make spanking noises against his ass as I drill him into the car seat.

"So. Fucking. Good," he slurs. "Don't ever stop!"

I don't know if I'll ever be able to. I don't have much control left over myself.

For the first time in my life, though, I don't care.



Ollie opens the door to the guest room at his house, and I enter with a half-asleep Lori in my arms. He's wrapped around me, nuzzling my cheek,

rubbing his head against the side of mine like a cat. My hands are under his backside, holding him up. He's enveloped in the blanket again, but I can feel his softening dick pressing against my stomach. The sedative Michael gave him when we arrived a minute ago is slowly taking effect.

I lay my knee on the blue bedsheet and lean toward the mattress to deposit Lori on it. My brain screams at me in protest as I gently lower him. Lori squeezes me against his body for a second, like he doesn't want to part from me as well, before letting his arms and legs drop heavily onto the bed.

I'm moving back when his capricious eyes open, showing only a ring of chestnut brown around his dilated pupils. "Gabe?" he calls, and a wave of protectiveness hits me.

It's hard not to drag him into my arms again, but I manage it. Just, as Bez disagrees with me.

Michael needs to check him, I remind him.

He can do it from your lap! Bez snarls.

I'm thinking that he actually could when Ollie unwraps the blanket, revealing Lori's body covered only in my jacket, sweat, and cum, looking all well-fucked. His black skirt is still twisted around his waist. Ollie pulls it off him, but when he tries to unbutton my jacket Lori swats his hands away.

"Shouldn't the sedative have worked by now?" Ollie turns to Michael. He's near a round, small table, a rigid metal case open on the wooden surface. He's taking out a bunch of medical stuff under the attentive gaze of his husband, Raph.

"Give it another minute. I didn't inject much, since Sari told me that the drug usually knocks people out once the effect is gone."

"How do we know the effect is gone?" Raph asks.

Uri appears on the threshold, twirling his knife between his fingers. "Gabe went at him for almost two hours in the car. Ollie kept asking me to check on them with Serena to see if they were still alive. And they certainly were," he scoffs, sending me a knowing look.

I haven't felt the urge to punch one of my brothers in a long time. Usually it's Bez suggesting it, but this time, it's all me.

"He pushed Ollie's hands away when he tried to take off his jacket. If he was still under the effect of the drug he'd have enjoyed the touch," Michael explains. "Shouldn't we call his family?" he then asks Ollie, as Rague walks into the room with a bowl full of water and some towels.

"He doesn't have anybody, but us."

"The gran he always talks about," Raph adds in a bored tone. He doesn't care about anything but his husband—and I use the word "care" loosely since he's a psychopath—but he has an eidetic memory. So, he remembers nearly everything he sees.

"His gran...died," Ollie explains.

There's a catch in Ollie's words, the pause before the word *died* tells me there's more to it. Is that why Lori hates hospitals?

"I need a sample of your blood." Michael cuts off my train of thought, pointing me to the chair near the table. I know he needs it to see if we can identify the components of the drug, but I can't tear myself away from the bed. From Lori.

We need to be sure he's fine, Bez tells me. And maybe he's on to something because the idea of leaving him brings the uneasiness back, slithering under my skin. Being with Lori strangely took it away.

Ollie is trying to clean Lori's face with a towel, but he keeps jerking away every time the damp fabric brushes against his skin.

"Lori, you need to stay still," I say, and suddenly his body relaxes against the bed and pillow.

"Interesting," Michael breathes out.

"Not really," Raph and Uri say at the same time, the former lifts his eyebrow while the latter leaves the room.

"It is. Although we know very well Lori's feelings toward Gabe, in his delirious state and because of the circumstances they shared, he feels safe

near him at the moment," Michael explains, as he starts checking on Lori. He takes a blood sample from him and then attaches an IV drip.

Lori keeps sleeping, not showing any sign of discomfort.

"I need to draw your blood now," Michael reminds me. I reluctantly move to the table to let him do it. Eyes never leaving the unmoving figure on the bed. When he's done, he pushes a cotton ball to the needle site, and then gathers his things before leaving with Raph.

It's me and Ollie in the room now. Only a few short hours of complete nightfall remain before the pending sunrise. It doesn't bother me. Insomnia has always been my faithful companion.

"You can take a shower if you want." Ollie's tired voice comes from the foot of the bed where he's sitting. His hand is on top of the sheet covering Lori's foot.

I nod, but I still don't move, standing near the table on the other side of the room.

"He won't wake up for a while and..." He sighs. "I think, maybe it would be better if you leave. Don't know how he'll react to seeing you after... what happened."

"Because he dislikes me and would've never had sex with me if he wasn't drugged," I finish his line of thinking.

"More or less." Ollie slowly nods, looking all guilty.

Fuck that! My Little Wasp wants us! Bez strongly disagrees.

He didn't when he was sane. The fact that he asked for my help doesn't mean anything.

Bez snorts derisively at me, like he knows something I don't. *If he really hated you, he'd have preferred a stranger to you.*

He still dislikes me and won't be happy to see me. The thought turns my muscles tense as my gut twists painfully. I know I have to leave. This is getting out of control.

Every step I take toward the door makes my skin itch, but I keep pushing forward.

Ollie's voice halts my steps, and I turn toward him. "Gabe, thank you for what you did. You saved my friend. I owe you."

My eyes fall on Lori. The lamp on the nightstand is illuminating his red cheeks and swollen lips. I'm still studying the way his hair curls at his neck and how his face looks so much younger without any makeup when Ollie calls my name again.

I fight hard to move my gaze to him. When I do, I remain silent. He doesn't owe me anything. I'd have done it for anybody in our family.

But would you have enjoyed it that much? Bez's rhetorical question makes me turn around and leave the room.

In the living room, Michael jumps off Raph's lap when he sees me advancing. He takes two steps away from the dining table in my direction.

"You need the IV as well."

"No, I don't," I tell him, moving toward the front door.

"The saline bag will flush out the rest of the drug you still have in your body," he insists, making me stop. Maybe it will help with the weird sensations I'm feeling.

Sure! Bez mocks me.

"Give me one to go." Michael frowns at my words but prepares a bag with all the necessary items and hands it to me. "Any news from Rami?" I ask Rague.

He's making pancakes in the open-concept kitchen. He renovated this old cottage in the middle of nowhere all by himself and did a great job. It surely helps that he owns a construction and demolition company with Ollie.

"Bailey left the club in a black BMW. Serena found it in an alley. No sign of Bailey, but she's on it. Rami got the video of you and Lori from the club, though."

I nod and ask for the keys to his car. He points to the bowl by the entrance, and I grab them before going for the door again.

“Don’t you want something to eat? You need to regain your strength,” I hear Michael say from behind me.

“No,” I simply reply, closing the door behind me.

Why are we fucking leaving? Bez hisses at me. *Those pancakes smelled good.*

If you want to stay so much, why aren’t you stopping me? He’s stronger than me, can easily force our body to stay.

Because I know you need your fucking time to accept what is already obvious, he huffs.

We’ll stop at a drive-through on the way home, I try to placate him. I’m not in the fucking mood, and he knows it.

Inside the garage, the red Suzuki Jimny that Rague bought Sully is parked near his company pickup. I quickly get in, and a minute later, I’m driving toward the Fulton River District and my apartment. At a red light, I check my phone. There are multiple texts from work that I’ll check later, one voicemail from Evelyn telling me she found a new temp PA, and several missed calls from Linda, my foster mother.

I find Rami’s contact and call him, placing my phone in the cupholder as the light changes to green.

“Yo!” he answers after a single ring. “You okay? No rusty parts, no bolts in need of a changing?”

I ignore his taunting. “Lori’s grandmother.”

“What about her?” he asks, and then I hear him cussing through the line before saying, “George, you scared the shit out of me!” That’s Dare’s pet snake. When Rami moved in with Hunter, he also started living with the triplets, the eighteen-year-olds: Ash, Ren, and Dare. Hunter took them and their pets in a couple of years back.

I wait for him to stop swearing. “How did she die?”

“And why so curious about Lori’s life all of a sudden, C-3PO?”

I know my silence drives him crazier than any response.

“I don’t have time for this now, need some sleep before Grizzly decides to go at my ass again.” Rami always shares too much for my liking. “She had cancer. Died soon after she was diagnosed. Lori and she were pretty close. She raised him,” he surrenders easily.

“At what hospital did she die?”

“In her apartment. Some terminal cancer patients prefer to share their last moments in familiar surroundings.”

There’s nothing fishy about it. Maybe Ollie’s odd wording was caused by worry for his friend. And Lori’s guilty conscience could be related to something else he did.

Don’t care. Hungry, my caveman alter reminds me.

“I want to know who the people in that gallery room at the club were,” I tell him.

“Do you want to go all knife-y on them?”

Lori’s agonized, twisted face appears in front of my eyes for a moment as I remember the snickers coming from the gallery.

“Yes,” I say matter-of-factly.

“Wow. Okay. How about the sex video?” Rami suddenly asks.

“Fucking burn it!” Bez replies. His overtaking maneuvers are increasing, and after years of steady balance, it’s unsettling to say the least.

I’ve never been very fond of change, even though it is the only constant in life. I’m very aware that nothing can stay the same. Things eventually morph into something different. But changes in my condition? I have a strong feeling that Lori Boone has the power to turn our life upside down.

And we’re getting there, Bez growls.

“Bez?” Rami asks in a shocked tone. “How have you been, you careless fucker?”

“Fuck. You,” Bez replies in an almost bored tone.

“Same old, same old, then,” Rami snorts.

“Burn the video, Rami,” I order him.

I hang up, pushing the button on my phone a little too hard as I turn into the diner drive-through. After getting a coffee and some waffles, I drive the last twenty minutes with the window down, enjoying the summer night air. I stop the car inside the underground parking garage of my building. The elevator ride to my apartment is spent thinking about another parking garage and the guy who assaulted Lori there.

Rami said that the security cameras were down—since I’m changing them—so Serena couldn’t track the guy outside the building when he ran off. It seems a little too convenient.

Who was he? Bez asks, strangely interested.

Lori said he didn’t know him, I remind him. *And we have never seen him either.*

A prospective client?

I take the few steps to my apartment door when the elevator reaches the thirty-fifth floor and place my hand on the panel next to it, letting Serena read it. Rami installed security systems in all our homes. His level of overprotectiveness got worse once Phoenix entered the picture.

Serena’s voice welcomes me as I step inside. I drop the car keys on the small table in the entrance and remind myself to have my new temp PA return it to Rague’s house later as I walk the short corridor that opens into a large living room.

I go straight to the sideboard, dropping the bag Michael gave me on the light brown sofa. I toss the empty to-go coffee cup and the crumpled paper bag in the small wastebasket, and I pour some whiskey into one of the upside-down glasses. The liquid trails down my throat, leaving a familiar

burning path that slightly assuages the uneasiness that hasn't left me since I walked out of Lori's room.

I feel sticky and sweaty as I make my way to the bathroom. The lights turn on as I move, a new apartment feature Remi brought with Serena.

The mirror reflects my tired face and rumpled blond hair. My shirt is open and wrinkled, my vest is missing buttons and has a dark wet spot where Lori drooled on me. My neck and chest are covered in marks.

None of my previous partners have ever left hickeys on me. As I keep looking at them, the restlessness lessens and the desire to pin Lori face down and fuck him unconscious increases. No drug involved this time.

Damn it. My cock plumps all the way up at the image forming inside my head. I need to take a shower and start that IV drip, hoping it will rid me of these impulses together with the remnants of the drug.

Good luck! Bez's sarcasm doesn't go unnoticed.

I quickly undress and slide inside the large shower stall. I let the multiple jets hit me as the water rolls down my body, washing away Lori's scent from my skin. My hand wraps around my shaft, and it's not Bez moving it this time. It's like an untamed part of me has found its way out. A part I'd pushed down many years ago.

My fingers squeeze the head and then glide down the whole length. My balls are full again and tingling already. I start to beat myself off, it hurts since I've come too many times already tonight, but I don't stop.

I come in under a minute with a low groan leaving my lips and dirty thoughts of Lori Boone filling my head.

four

LORI



I wake up slowly. My head feels messy, like a sack filled with parrots and squirrels. It takes quite a lot of effort to shake some of the fogginess away. It feels like one of those times when I've drunk way too much and I'm in need of a whole new identity.

My body is playing possum, not answering to the simple instructions my melted brain is trying to send. I ache everywhere. Even my damn toes are asking for mercy. It takes a second to force my caked eyes to open—I'm at Ollie's.

I see the picture of me, Ollie, and Sully-doo skating at Maggie Daley Park that I left on the dresser to remind Rague that this is my room—not just a guest room. Even though it seems like Brad, Sully's bestie, has moved in here. His stuff is everywhere. Sport gear, clothes, and more junk scattered on every surface.

Pink, the house cat is studying me from the foot of the bed. His white fur shines under the artificial light, making the scar crossing his face even more visible than usual, but his missing ear is hidden by the night shadows. I try to greet him, but my throat feels like sandpaper and I let out a cough instead.

My head falls on the soft pillow again, and I catch the shape of a small bottle of water on the side table. I move my boulder-heavy arm to grab it

and frown at the sight of a gray suit sleeve covering my whole hand. An expensive suit. Gabe's.

The cashmere blanket covering me can't stop the sudden chill spreading through my body. Flashes from the sex club come back to me, and my heart starts pounding inside my chest.

Everything else slows down, the air around me turns suffocating and slippery against my face. The unbearable pain is the first memory hitting me. The excruciating agony that clouded my mind, the blazing torment submerging my body. The chill sinks in too far, and shivers skitter down my arms and legs. My teeth start to chatter.

Then Gabe's face appears, blurry at first. His handsome features turn more definite, his slate-gray eyes, light eyelashes, shiny hair, parted lips. I can feel his solid body like a wall of wondrous heat against mine, pulling me up, arms sliding around me. The chills disappear, replaced by smoldering flames licking my whole body. I hear his voice, filled with tension, and I squeeze my eyes shut.

I'm panting, trying to center myself. It doesn't work; I'm bombarded by broken memories. I let out a pitiful moan, remembering some of the words I uttered as his fingers stretched me deliciously and achingly open, the craving in my abdomen almost unbearable. It was bliss—the scent of him, the strength of his arms as they held me against him, his voice low and tight as the heaviness in my gut built and built. His hands cupping my ass, kneading hard, parting my flesh, fingers sliding between my cheeks, holding me down. I squeeze my eyes even tighter.

The ridge of his thick, perfect erection pushed between the cheeks of my ass, teasing my hole, making me burn with helpless want and erasing any other thoughts from my mind. His hands rested on my waist, fingers digging in, the long, thick erection pressing against my greedy entrance. My center stuffed open, wet with cum, filled with heat, impaled by his cock. His dark gaze on me, setting me on fire.

Everything went upside down, my stomach flipped, and then suddenly, I was pushed onto a leather car seat. My knees spread; my hips went up.

“Please give me more cock,” I said at some point. The memory of his low grunt sends hot shivers down my spine, straight to my balls.

Is that a memory or a drug-induced dream? My sore butt answers for me. Gabe fucked me. Gabe put his long dick inside me.

My own dick twitches at the images shuffling in my head.

“Sod a dog! I’m horny for Gabe,” I scream to the empty room. He fucked me, and I begged for it! Bleeding hell! I shoved myself against him, threw my entire body, clung to him, moaning like a whore. I craved him between my legs, inside me. And I could feel it. His cock, thick and hard against my thigh. In me.

He’s definitely not straight, but that doesn’t mean anything. Most of the time he ignores me, looking down at me like I’m some kind of nuisance, not worthy of any attention. But while giving me pleasure, his eyes were full of fire and embers.

What the fuck have I done? The memories are a jumbled mess inside my head, but I can clearly remember how I’d gone far beyond the point of having any pride or self-respect. It doesn’t matter that I was under the influence of a very, very powerful drug. Whatever the reason, I still acted like a horny, rabid chipmunk.

This demonic shitty day couldn’t end more miserably. But that’s Sod’s Law, isn’t it? Maybe I can drown myself in the river and get eaten by alligators. Are there any alligators in the Chicago River? Baby piranhas? A lost anaconda?

I moan and shudder, making Pink jump down the bed with a hiss my way. It takes more than a moment for me to kick my own misery in the balls and let anger take the reins.

That tosser, wanker, dead-from-the-neck-up, nobsocket owner of the club, Mr. Hot Shot. He will feel my wrath as soon as I can get some strength into my aching body again. I slump back, and with the movement, a warm comforting scent enters my nostrils. I raise my arm and draw my nose near the incredibly soft fabric of Gabe’s suit. I’m about to take a cautious inhale when the bedroom door starts opening.

Like a kid caught stealing an extra chocolate biscuit, I quickly slide my arm back under the blanket as I turn my head toward Ollie. He isn't moving, standing in the room's threshold, simply staring at me. Then he lets out a high-pitched scream and runs toward me. In the next breath, he's on me, pulling me up and squeezing me like a used lemon slice.

"Death by boa constrictor, now I know the feeling." I sound like a three-pack-a-day geezer.

Ollie doesn't let go of me. "If I ever get an ulcer, I'll name it after you," he grumbles, but I can hear the relief in his voice at seeing me awake.

"Ulcer Boone? It's catchy," I retort.

"Ulcer Gremlin sounds better," I hear Sully-doo's joking voice. I can barely shift my body with Ollie still wrapped all around me, but my eyes find him standing near the door.

"You scared me. You can't leave me, Lor, remember our promise?" Ollie whispers in my ear. Of course, I do. I even have a tattoo on my hip as a proof.

"I need you," he adds, and damn, it's nice to hear it since I've felt a little left out after he found Rague. I'm very happy for them. Hell, I know how much Ollie deserves love and happiness, but I've missed him. His life has been so chaotic lately that we've barely had time to see each other.

"Everybody needs a Lori," Sully-doo says sweetly.

"Aw, I love it when you pump my tires. I surely am a limited edition." I wink at him even though I'm strangely uneasy. I feel off. My muscles have turned rigid, and I'm trying like hell to relax against Ollie. When he lets me go, the stiffness lessens a little. It's like my body doesn't want to be touched.

"You're the peanut butter to my jelly toast," he quotes the words of the very clingy boy I dated in junior high, Gooey Louie.

"Together we are puke-inducing, then."

His throat bobs, and then he lets out a short laugh. It sounds wet, but he's clear-eyed by the time he stops. Rague quickly appears behind him, pulling Ollie's back to his front.

"How do you feel?" he asks me.

I shift my body until my back is against the wooden headboard. "I wouldn't be opposed to you using your shiny axe to chop my head off right about now. But other than that, I'm bloody thirsty." I cough and Sully-doo passes me the water bottle, handing me also a couple of pills. I don't ask what they are for, just down them with the water.

Michael enters the room, and after a couple of seconds when he is not followed by Raph I ask, "Bones! Where's Bully Boy? Why isn't he here groping you?"

"Raph is not here," Michael replies as he starts checking my vitals.

"Not here means away from you."

Michael sighs as he lets go of my wrist and replies with a nod.

"Open the window, KKJ," I tell Rague. "I need to see the pigs flying in the sky, looking up, and forming fart clouds."

"Pigs can't look upward, and it's nighttime."

"Raph is at the base," Michael clarifies. Oh, okay that's the only reason Raph would detach himself from his husband's cute butt. "I'm glad to see you're you again." He doesn't sound very glad.

"Do you remember what happened?" he then asks with a serious tone.

I feel my cheeks grow warm, but I don't lower my eyes. "Some of it. I know I was dosed, and I remember the killer pain and some of what followed." The memory of the contrast between my wrecked, blissed-out state and Gabe's immaculate, composed self is so positively filthy. It's also deeply and bloody embarrassing, but at the same time hot beyond belief.

"Did you get Mr. Hot Shot?" I ask, then looking at their confused faces I add, "The owner of the club."

“Philip Bailey is in the wind. The club is closed for now, Rami and the triplets released some rats in the kitchen, which the firemen were not very happy about. We’re focusing on the drugs now; Hunter and his cousin Opal are working to find out the source of the components, which Sari figured out thanks to your and Gabe’s blood samples,” Rague explains.

“Gabe was dosed, too?” He looked fine by my recollection. Not as sex-crazed as me.

“Less than you. He took only a sip of his drink.”

While I drank it all in one gulp. Wait, does that mean that the drug made him hard for me?

Did it turn him gay just for a few hours, forcing him to fuck me?

Is that why he isn’t here?

My heart thunders and blood rushes around my head as I try to think back. He surely knew what he was doing. I don’t remember any hesitation or embarrassment on his part. But the drug messed my memories up and the pain took away all my sanity—just the thought of the agony I suffered has goose bumps cover my entire body. I surely cannot trust my recollection of what happened. Fuck!

“Where’s Rami?” I hear Ollie as I’m trying to stop my inner freak-out.

“Coming,” Rami’s voice reaches the room just before he walks through the door.

“With Hunter’s snake lodged inside your behind?” The joke slips out of my lips, showing me I’m regaining some control over my mind.

Hunter stops behind Rami, looming over my bed as he hands his boyfriend a tumbler that reads *“my boyfriend’s python makes me happy.”* How he can keep a straight face is beyond me.

Rami looks tired. “I see you feel fine. Sully said you remember more or less what happened.”

I look around the room, just now noticing his absence. Since his near-death experience a few months back, he’s gotten more closed-off. He’s always

been an introvert, but the tragic experience turned him into a loner, which is not acceptable. He's part of our triad: Ollie, me, and him.

We've helped each other endure the dreadful events of...life. Family is not always the picture that comes with the frame.

"Which means that they gave you the latest variety of the drug. Gabe told me it worked kind of like a truth serum, loosening your tongue."

"It did?" I search my mind, but I cannot recall saying anything apart from the obscene begging.

"Do you feel achy all over? Dry throat? Tired and dizzy?"

"Yes, to all of them."

"The woman who was hospitalized three days ago had the same symptoms, and the more time passed, the more she could remember."

"Is she okay?" Michael asks.

"Um, she tried to kill herself. She had it rough." Rami doesn't add anything else, and my imagination runs free, making me shiver, and reminding me how defenseless I was when the drug was doing its job inside me. I actually feel lucky Gabe was there.

"Fuck!" Rague cusses, holding Ollie closer to his body.

"The warehouse search was a bust," Rami continues. "We only found a couple of empty crates."

"You got closer to Phoenix, though," Michael says.

Rami makes a noncommittal sound. His lips are twisted in an angry line. "I did, but that fucker discovered we were coming somehow," he barks.

"You'll get him, Red," Hunter tells Rami in a confident tone.

"You will," Rague agrees, and they all nod or make some kind of encouraging noise.

"What time is it?" I ask.

“Seven p.m. on Friday,” Hunter answers.

“Friday?” I slept an entire day. “Crikey, work!”

“Don’t worry, Gabe put you on a medical leave. He said to take a few days,” Ollie lets me know.

“A few days? I can’t. I have work to do, people are counting on me.” I try to sit up straighter, and although my body hurts less, I feel so damn exhausted.

“You need rest. I’ll go get you some juice and something to eat,” Michael says before leaving the room.

“Where’s my phone?” I hiss at nobody in particular.

“Right there.” Hunter points at the nightstand, and sure enough, the sparkly rainbow middle finger on the cover is shining on top of the dark wooden surface.

I grab it and dial Gabe’s number, but after one ring it goes to voicemail. The bastard hung up on me. I try again. One ring. Voicemail. Gritted teeth...my teeth.

“Rague, gimme.” I pull back the too-long sleeve of the suit jacket and wiggle my fingers at him, extending my arm.

His scowl makes people run away in fear—along with his ginormous bod—but I’ve learned it’s just his regular face. Plus, I’ve heard him say such syrupy stuff to Ollie, I could never be afraid of him, not that I ever was.

“Your phone. I need to call my jerk of a boss,” I huff at him.

“He’s busy,” he replies.

“He’s always busy. Gimme!” I wait impatiently as he slides his cell out of his pocket and hands it to me so bloody slowly.

My irritation reaches higher levels when Gabe answers on the second ring, “What? Everything okay? Lori?”

“Arsehole” is on the tip of my tongue, but I swallow it down, reminding myself what he did for me...to me. “I can’t stay at home for a few days!”

My loud statement is met with silence. Then he simply says, “You have to.”

His monotone voice starts a familiar flutter in my stomach. I hate it. I want it.

“No, I won’t. I have two cases I’m helping with. They are pro bono, the clients are counting on me.”

I hear a muffled sound, like he covered the phone with his hand, and then someone in the background...crying? Firing another PA? He’s always at the office, the first one to arrive and the last one to leave. I kind of admire his dedication.

After a few seconds Gabe replies, “Cutler will take care of them.”

Cutler? King Midas? He doesn’t give a bloody fuck about anything but money. “He won’t even spare them a glance.”

“I’ll look into them, then,” he hurriedly says, like he wants to end the conversation.

My mouth turns slack. Whiplash! He’s still an arrogant prick, but at the same time a caring...boss? *Friend*? The idea of being friends with Gabe feels ridiculous.

“You...will?” I ask dubiously. I mean I have no doubt he will, but Gabe taking care of my little pro bono cases is so surreal to me. “Yourself?”

Another loud cry reaches my ear from the phone. It sounded pained. Is he with a donor?

“That’s what I said. I dislike redundancy. Don’t come to work. Rest,” he practically orders me, before hanging up. I move the phone so that I can turn a death glare at it, hoping it will fly through time and space and reach Gabe’s stupid face.

If it’s true that God created the world in six days, on the seventh, he made Gabe just to bother me.

“Fucking hate when he hangs up like that,” Rami mutters. “So rude.”

Yeah, Gabe is not a time waster, nor does he care about other people's feelings. But he's a skilled lawyer, and I know he'll take good care of my pro bono cases. I, on the other hand, can use those free days to start hunting Mr. Hot Shot. Thoughts fire in my head as I think about my next step.

"I want my revenge, Reacher. Tell me, what's your plan?" I ask Rami.

"First, regain your strength, Gremlin." He takes a sip from his tumbler and leans back against Hunter's massive chest. They are both brawny and sexy. I had a sandwich dream a few weeks back, in which I was the ham in between their *baguettes*. But I usually have sex dreams at night, I even sleepwalk when I'm stressed.

"I just need to eat something, and I'll be good to go. This is fucking personal to me."

"It's also personal to Gabe. And he's...working on it, while you're in no shape to do that," Rague states.

"Working? What does that mean?" I ask.

"He's hunting down the people who were watching you from the gallery room inside the sex club," Ollie lets me know.

"And fucking them up," Hunter adds.

"Gabe? Fucking them up?" I sound incredulous to my own ears. He's the embodiment of icy control when he takes care of a maggot.

"He's relentless and unpredictable when he turns into B—" Rami cuts off whatever he was about to say.

"B?" I repeat.

"From C-3PO to...Terminator," Rague interjects.

"Terminator? Unpredictable? Come on, Magnum P.I. here could stop Gabe with a punch to the face."

Hunter shrugs with a grunt.

"Despite the fact that I'd pay to see that, no, not even my grizzly could halt...his thirst for revenge," Rami insists.

Really? It must be a side of him I've never seen. The thought of not knowing him entirely bugs me for some weird reason. But at the same time, Gabe punishing those disgusting fuckers for me spreads a delicious warmth inside me. Still, I would have liked to be a part of it.

"It's not fucking fair. Those are my kills! Mine!" I complain.

"Philip Bailey is still out there," Rague reminds me.

"I want to tear the daft prick's spinal column out and beat him to death with it," I hiss.

"Lor, it's not over until the fat lady sings!" Ollie quotes one of my gran's sayings. It lifts and crashes my spirit at the same time. "When you get out of that bed we'll get him."

Michael enters the room, holding a tray with some food and a drink.

"Freshly squeezed orange juice, and I made you a sponge cake!" he announces, placing the tray on my lap. Rague shakes his head at me, while Ollie widens his eyes with horror.

"Looks like Rocky Balboa went a round with it." The shapeless cake has cracks all over, burned edges, and an uncooked core. Michael is a terrible baker, and the worst part is that he doesn't give up even though all of us have told him so.

"Why do you keep doing this to us?" Rami whines at him.

"He's probably man-STRUATING again. Are you a tipped down little Tabasco bottle, Bones?" I smirk at him, before taking a sip from the glass.

Everybody scrunches their noses, and I snort. Menstrual blood is a no, but seeing it spraying from a maggot's carotid is fine. Figures.

Rami comes to my aid. "Didn't he suffer enough?"

Michael heaves a sigh of sheer exasperation. "You didn't even try it."

"And I'm not going to. Save it to poison your husband. Also, when I'm indisposed, I follow the lovely tradition of dunking myself in a tub of

frozen yogurt,” I tell Michael. He yanks the tray away and stomps out of the room. Thank God, I was holding the juice.

“That wasn’t very nice,” Ollie scolds me.

“I didn’t hear you offer to try that atrocity,” I retort. “None of you did!”

“I just got my taste back, thanks to Hunter’s magic dick. Don’t wish to lose it again.” Hunter grunts at his boyfriend’s words. But it’s actually true. Rami had a condition called sensory numbness, which disappeared when he started dating Hunter. “Not to mention that at the sight of that cake, Gordon Ramsey would’ve thrown himself out of the window.” Rami shakes his head.

“Welcome to cynical island, population you!” Ollie taunts Rami.

“Calm down, Kitty,” Rague tries to soothe his husband, caressing his belly in small circles.

“Ollague has been sickeningly sweet since they got back,” Rami states.

“Ollague?”

“Ollie and Rague...Ollague!” Rami announces excitedly. After Miphael—Michael and Raphael—he had to make up more ship names.

“How about you two?” Michael asks, coming back in the room with a bowl filled with frozen yogurt and a spoon. He glares at me as he unceremoniously drops the bowl on my lap. Touchy tosser.

Then he looks at Rami and Hunter. “So? What’s your combined name?”

“Ramer, duh!” Rami answers.

“Ramer? I don’t know if I like it, Red,” Hunter tells him, which starts a discussion among them.

“Ollie?” I call him. “Wednesday? Did someone feed her?” I can’t believe I remembered my sweetly vicious pet only now.

“She’s fine. Ren is taking care of her.”

Ren, one of the triplets, loves animals. He's working at a pet clinic, and we volunteer together at a pet shelter that he and his brothers started.

"...Hantami? That's terrible, Hunter Bear!" I half hear Rami saying as I finish the yogurt. I didn't know how hungry I was before I started eating. But I need more. First though...I remove the blanket and look down at the suit jacket covering me for a second. It looks big on me. The softness of the fabric and Gabe's scent coming off it as I move are so damn comforting somehow.

When I slide my legs off the bed, Ollie jumps toward me. "Where do you think you're going?"

"Mmm, this sausage fest is great, but it's like I have a fish tank in my pelvis in urgent need of clearing."

"I read somewhere that people make better decisions with their bladder full," Michael lets us know one of his interesting facts.

"Like pissing in the frozen yogurt bowl. I'm very close to doing that," I drawl, all skepticism as I stand up, swatting Ollie's hand away.

"Is that Gabe's suit jacket?" Rami sounds surprised to see me wearing it. No more than me though.

"It is," Ollie answers, then turns toward me. "I couldn't take it off you, you kept slapping my hands away."

"I did?" I must have been really out of it.

"I'll come back with Sari tomorrow." Michael squeezes my shoulder, and the urge to remove his hand is strong. But I fight against it, almost sighing in relief as he moves away.

"Where is he?"

"He sent you a text, his flight was delayed. Uri went to the airport to get him," Michael says as he walks toward the door. "I need to go. Drink and eat if you're hungry. You'll be great in no time."

"We'll let you be. Try to sleep, Gremlin, and no eating after midnight," Rami jokes at my expense. He moves toward me, and I instinctively take a

step back.

“Hey, just want to give you a hug.” Rami lifts his palms up.

My laugh is too high-pitched to sound real. I feel awkward, my body doesn’t want to be near anybody.

“If you need a *hugasm* give it to your boyfriend,” I try to make a joke of it.

“Hugasm?” Hunter echoes.

“Hug plus orgasm. A hugasm.”

“He already gave me one of those today...twice.”

“TMI, Rami. As always.” Ollie rolls his eyes.

Hunter lets out a low, raspy laugh, pulling Rami toward the door, looking at him with an expression of adoration. He tilts his head my way in goodbye.

“You keep me posted, Reacher, or I’ll come after you too,” I yell over my shoulder at Rami as I slowly make my way to the bathroom. Damn, my ass hurts with every step. And I feel dry cum scratching my skin.

“Meg said to call her.” Their foster mother is a psychiatrist, and she surely wants to check on my mental health. Maybe I should ring her.

“Do you need anything?” Ollie asks, seemingly not quite ready to leave me alone. Rague takes a step toward him, looking ready to fight whatever invisible danger hides in the shadows to protect his hubby.

I missed Ollie so fucking much, but right now, I need some time alone to actually process what the bloody hell happened to me.

“Pizza. Vegetables, no tomatoes.” I send him a pleading look. “From In Crust We Trust?” Which is the best pizza place in Chicago.

“Sure,” Rague hurriedly replies. “Come on, Kitty.” When Ollie doesn’t move from the en suite threshold, Rague grabs his hand. “Sully is here; Lori will be fine.”

“I need to take a shower, Ollie. I know you want to take a peek at all this again.” I slide a hand down my body, smirking at Rague’s growl. It’s so

easy to rattle him. Too easy. “KKJ, this has gotten old. Chill!” I say as I let the door close on their faces a bit too hard.

I unbutton the jacket and carefully hang it on the hook on the wall. I lean toward it, letting my nose dive into the fabric. Gabe’s cologne and something else, a more intimate scent fills my lungs. My shoulders slump and that weird flutter is back in my belly.

When my eyes open again, they fall on my reflection in the mirror over the sink.

My curls look like a preschooler’s scribble, crazily pointing in every possible direction. Black shadows are visible under my eyes and my lips are chapped and puffed. I let go of the jacket and take the two steps to the sink. My nipples are red, and bruises mar my hips, and when I turn to check my back, my tushy as well.

A sudden memory of Gabe’s fingers digging into my flesh assails me.

The slap of skin against skin echoes in my ears, my own pants against his silence. Me splayed open with his hips pressing, hitting my arse every time he thrust. The heat in me an inferno, burning my insides as I writhed under him, begging him to come inside me, to make my hole his.

My fingers slide down the crack of my butt, and I follow the path his dry jizz left between my legs. I just now realize.

He...he came inside me.

Too many thoughts, too many feelings, all battling in my overwhelmed mind. And Christ, my arse hurts. A flash of Gabe’s gray eyes filled with heat, his mouth parted to let my name slip out, his strong grip on my hips, his cock spearing me again and again, rutting me, hits me, and my body trembles with desire while my mind is engulfed by incredulity.

A tiny, shameless flash of vicious satisfaction spreads in my chest at the sight of those purple marks on me because cool and composed Gabe couldn’t control himself while he fucked me. The gratification is quickly accompanied by a dreadful thought. He felt forced to help me, and even worse, in front of a bunch of perverts. I enjoyed some voyeurism when I was younger, but never when drugged or against my will.

I hope Gabe found his inner Sweeney Todd, cutting those bastards' throats one by one.

I feel violated. A shiver runs through my body, and I hug myself for a minute, struggling against the distressing sensation. It helps to remember that Gabe was with me. I know he covered me with his body from the leery stares. He protected me.

Does he regret it? Not seeing him when I woke up has left me strangely unsettled. I can still smell him on my skin, or imagine I can. It doesn't help the crazy train of thought.

I move to the shower and turn on the water, letting it pelt down the stall walls as it warms. Once I've washed myself—extensively and thoroughly—I can still somehow feel Gabe on me. I physically removed the evidence of our sex marathon, but the bruises, the soreness, and the memories are still here, with me.

I never felt this marked, taken before, like no one but him will do.

What the bleeding, sodding fuck! Gabe Reed. That's ridonkulous. I rub myself furiously in body cream and then attack my face with toner and moisturizer.

The experience is still too fresh, or maybe this is a horrible side effect of the drug. I need to stop this before it festers. I need a distraction. Maybe I should eat something while I wait for Ollie and Rague to come back.

I grab one of the oversized t-shirts I left in the dresser and slide it on as I make my way out of the room and to the living room.

I'm opening a pack of chips when Sully appears in the kitchen—almost tripping on one of the chairs around the table. He's such an uncoordinated klutz, an adorable one with a propensity for accidents. His square black glasses have slid down his nose a little, and his hair is mussed, like he's run his hands in it multiple times. I know it's hard for him to sleep. The haunted look has become a permanent feature in his oddly beautiful eyes, one brown, one green. He was never the confident type, but he's turned into an insecure recluse.

“You know the sun is the best source of vitamin D? Your skin will turn see-through if you spend another day indoors.” I drop onto the couch near him with enough force to push a whoosh out of it, regretting it straight away as my tushy protests in pain.

“How are you?”

“I’m splendid,” I reply a little too forcefully.

“Are you going to act like a bitch for the rest of the night and pretend nothing happened?” he retorts. I’m glad to hear that his spirit is not broken, but the boy needs to start living again.

“Is that an invitation to your club? What’s the website address again? Miserydwellers.com?” I taunt back.

“Do you still have those bats in the trunk of your car? I need one to beat your insensitive ass up!”

“Bugger, my car!”

“It’s in the garage. Uri drove it here this morning before he left,” Sully lets me know. I tilt the pack of chips his way, but he shakes his head and hugs his bent long legs close to his chest, placing his cheek on his knees. He looks so damn young and lost. But I’m done feeling sorry for him. He’s seventeen and needs to fight for his future.

“Look, making peace is a skill I’ve never had. I rut and pout, until the time for healing has gone and the wounds become permanent scars that keep me awake at night. Until they morph into shadows and haunt my dreams as well.”

He nods, knowing what I’m talking about, but he has enough grace to stay silent, probably at the sight of my watery eyes.

“Don’t follow my limping footsteps. Happiness comes from you. You’re the architect of your own. It took you a while to heal, and you partly did, at least physically, but now it’s time you face your fears and tell them to sod off. Don’t waste your life like this, Sully-doo.”

His trembling smile is not very convincing, but I see something new in his eyes. Hopefully determination.

“Where’s Brad tonight? And did he move in here?” I ask him, since it feels like we both need a change of topic. Plus, I don’t like Brad in my room. He used some of my body cream and moisturizer.

“School away game.” He shrugs. “He didn’t move in. It’s just temporary. His father is renovating their house.”

“Aren’t they gazillionaires? Can’t he go to a five star hotel?”

“He could, but you know Brad.” Sully’s lips turn into an affectionate smile.
“He hates all that fake, pretentious luxury.”

“And he loves his Sully-doo!” I boop his nose. “Have you fucked yet?”

“What?” Sully’s head snaps up so fast his glasses bump against his forearm sliding all the way down his nose. The temple tips avoid the fall remaining miraculously behind his ears. “Ech!” he makes a revolted sound while pushing his glasses back up.

“Why not? Brad is Thor-hot...in a sweet, loyal, himbo kind of way.” I really like Brad. Physically, he’s Sully’s opposite: tall, brawny, long blond hair and smiley blue eyes. And his personality is very different as well; he’s cheerful and easy to befriend, there’s no cloud shadowing his thoughts. Perfect for a first time.

“Don’t see anything wrong in starting to explore with a friend.”

“Are you telling me you and...Ollie?” He makes a disgusted face.

“Come off it! If that was the case, I’d have reminded him every chance I got. ‘Oh, Ollie, pass the cheese, and do remember that time I smashed you?’”

“You smashing him?”

“Hey, I can be vers if I feel like it.” I make thrusting movements with my hips, causing him to wince.

“Brad is like a brother to me. No smashing there unless he does it on a football field. Plus, I’m not sure he’s into boys.” He makes a pondering face.

Sully doesn’t know if his bestie likes the chimichanga? That’s odd. I know almost everything about Ollie and vice versa. Although, every friendship has its own boundaries and precious little peculiarities.

“Ren Wright just arrived.” Serena’s voice coming from the front door intercom stops our conversation, making Sully jerk back, almost pushing the bag of chips out of my hand.

“Easy,” I tell him in a soothing tone. The alarm system Rami installed is very cool and sort of creepy, but Sully has turned a tad jumpy since what he went through.

A few seconds later, the door opens and in comes Ren, one of Hunter’s triplets.

“Hey, if it’s not Offspring Two from the Scooby Gang,” I joke, alluding to the way he and his brothers call Rami, Velma.

He makes a clicking sound with his tongue, staring at my loose t-shirt that reaches my knees—it’s hippie-fabulous. His mirrored glasses are, as usual, covering his eyes, sandy blond hair waving around his temples, and a small smirk on his lips. But it’s his clothes that make my eyes widen with horror.

“The atrocious ensemble you’re wearing is a crime against eyesight.” I cover my eyes, not wanting to look at his prison-orange t-shirt and blue cargo shorts anymore. What happened to his no-brainer, polo-and-jeans look?

When I lower my hand, I notice that my statement doesn’t seem to have affected him. So, either he doesn’t care—which is impossible because I know he’s the only one among his bros who has taste—or...

“It’s a walk of shame! You shagged someone,” I yell.

He nods, and after stealing the forgotten bag of chips from my hand, drops himself on the black armchair to my left.

“Did they tear off your clothes with their teeth? That’s hot!” I wiggle my eyebrows at him suggestively.

“You look as annoying as usual. So, why did I have to take care of Wednesday?” Ren completely ignores my question and instead complains around a mouthful of chips.

“Is she okay?”

“She mauled both your pillows. There were feathers all over your tiny apartment. Still are.” He’s such a prick, a lovable one, but still a prick.

“My spiteful little lady. She must have felt abandoned.” I make a sympathetic sound.

“She stole my wallet from my jacket. Twice.”

“Her previous owner must have taught her that,” Sully suggests.

“You mean the one she beaked to death and ate?” Ren jokes.

“Nobody talks shite about my lady pet! Sully-doo, release the Pink Kraken on him!” I point a finger at Ren while looking around for the cat. She can be a real bitch when she wants.

“Already have Ash’s diabolical cat in my house, thank you very fucking much.” Now, his brother’s cat is really an unholy monster—and I’m not referring to her vicious personality.

“Don’t you have a snake in your room?” Sully reminds him, and he’s correct, Ren owns a snake that likes to wrap itself around things like arms and legs.

“Aren’t you supposed to love animals working at a pet clinic and volunteering at Pet Palace?” I taunt him.

“Animals, sure. Ungodly creatures, fuck no.” Ren tsk.

“How are things at the clinic?” Sully asks him. He worked there for a couple of months, until he had a relapse and stopped going out again. I don’t know what triggered it, but it has been three months since then.

“Dr. Rupert is as forgetful as usual, and Pearl misses you,” Ren tells him.

“She misses my morning coffee and our chats during breaks.” Sully’s face has turned melancholic.

“Are you going to come back anytime soon?” Ren hazards. The two boys have become friends. I thought Sully would have hit it off with Dare, the silent one of the triplets, but Ren is the one he has more in common with. Their passion for anything furry brought them together. And perhaps their painful pasts as well.

“I want to,” is Sully’s vague reply.

They start talking about animal stuff as my eyes catch on my reflection in But right now, it’s my exhausted face in the mirrored lenses that gets all my attention.

“Fuck, I look terrible.” The words slip out of my mouth. “What happened to my porcelain skin?”

“Porcelain?” Sully snorts.

“Like a human toilet?” Ren adds.

“Eat shit, both of you.” I flip them off.

“Shouldn’t you be the mature one?” Sully jokes.

Ren clicks his tongue again. “The same guy that got drunk and dared me to do a striptease?”

“Offspring Two, come closer.” I lean toward him. “Come on, I’m too tired to slap you, so bash your face against my palm.”

“Nutcase!” Ren shakes his head at me. “Why are you sitting in this almost dark living room with those long faces?”

“Waiting.”

Ren asks, “Your friend? What’s his name again?” He turns to Sully.

“Brad. And no, he’s at an away game. You met him?” Sully frowns at Ren.

“No, but you’re always talking about him; seems almost like I did.”

“Rague and Ollie are home,” Serena announces. *Finally. I’m starving.*

Ren stays for dinner, and the banter at the table helps to get me out of my head for a while. After eating four slices of heaven, my eyes are sliding closed, so I say goodnight to everybody—spending a little more time to reassure Ollie I’m okay—and go to my room.

I lock the door and put the key in the dresser drawer under a pile of clothes. I tend to sleepwalk when I’m stressed, and I don’t want to end up in bed between Ollie and his husband. Rague would take that as an invitation to maim me.

I flop down boneless, face-first on the bed. A groan leaves my mouth.

As soon as I close my eyes, a foreboding sensation assails me, forcing me to spin and sit. Flashes from last night at the club shuffle too fast in front of my eyes. Cold sweat rolls down my body, and a fight-or-flight response starts inside my panicked brain.

Hearing the crazy rhythm of my heart, I jog to the bathroom and messily splash water on my face, holding on to the edge of the sink as I attempt to calm myself down. I look at my reflection in the mirror as I count my breaths.

My eyes are caught by something gray behind me. Gabe’s jacket hanging from the wall.

Without a single thought, I take off my t-shirt and wrap myself in the soft fabric again. I don’t care if it’s filthy. I inhale deeply and feel my rigid muscles loosen as I succumb to Gabe’s smell. It prompts a relaxed feeling all through my body and mind. I’m instantaneously safe.

Then it sets off something else. My traitorous body does a happy dance. My nipples turn hard. My sore pucker clenches and unclenches, and my balls feel heavy all of a sudden. But exhaustion wins, and I turn off the bathroom switch and lie on the bed again.

Falling asleep while I smell him around me keeps dark thoughts away, and not only the ones from two nights ago. Gran’s smile suddenly pops in front of my eyes, filling them with tears. Her frail figure on her bed comes next, her almost transparent skin, her empty eyes. The syringe.

I lift my arm and push my nose into the jacket sleeve, filling my lungs full until I feel like they are close to exploding and then let all the air out. I do it again and again until I find myself nuzzling the fabric like a child's blanket.

I don't want to think about why or how his scent has the power to calm me down. Tonight, I just need to sleep.

The next two nights as well, enveloped in his rich smell.

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five

LORI



A few days later, I'm having a coffee with Ollie at our usual café downtown, talking about very important issues.

"It's a nuclear turnoff when a guy oh so delicately jerks the gherkin using only three fingers around his cock. I mean, it's called slap the ham sandwich for a reason," I tell him, taking a sip from my cup.

"Ugh! I get it, I get it! You've got such an *evocative* way with words!"

I grin ghoulishly at Ollie's wincing face.

"I still think shrimping is the worst," he adds.

"Oh yeah, that bloke who attacked your feet," I remember out loud one of Ollie's quickies going bad—before he was married to KKJ.

He nods. "How could he want to suck on a one-night stand's toes? I could've flip-flopped my way around in pig's shit during the day for all he knew."

"Or worked in a public pool," I state, pretending to gag—because skin fungus. Enough said.

"Eating at Red Lobster and asking for endless shrimp will never be the same for me."

“Queening on the other hand, it’s such an in-your-face behavior, I love it,” I joke, wiggling on my chair. My bussy is not sore anymore, and I’m still horny as a junkyard dog.

“You mean Kinging?” Ollie smirks.

I pucker my lips in thought. “I suppose you’re right, since we’re blokes and we sit on another man’s face for it.”

“And talking about *blokes*, Noah has been staring at you since we got here.” Ollie is talking about the barista I screwed around with a few months back. Noah? I don’t really like him, he’s a conceited dick, but the blow job he gave me was pretty good and he’s got a tight arse.

Right now, though, I just don’t feel it. Did the drug break me? My body is in a constant state of arousal, considering how many times I’ve fondly remembered—mental cough—wanked like a teen entering puberty—mental cough—Gabe’s cock. My dick is all chafed for how many times I’ve remembered it.

I’d be lying if I said that I wouldn’t mind my arse being sore again. There’s something about feeling that deep, stinging sensation that sends a little jolt of pleasure through me, like a reminder of how bloody out of the world it felt.

My phone beeps, and I scramble to check the message with embarrassing speed. I deflate a bit, it’s not Gabe, but Octopus Prime, my landlord, reminding me about my eviction.

I can’t believe I’m disappointed by his disappearance. He makes my life hell—when he’s in it. His overly controlled behavior, haughty ways, and dismissive attitude are so annoying. And I miss it.

I miss HELL.

That’s bonkers. It must be a post-drug effect. That’s my story and I’m sticking to it.

Trying to distract myself, I ask, “Wasn’t the barista’s name Luke?”

“You told us it was Luke, but it’s actually Noah, and he’s yummy.” Ollie eyes the barista. Luke because he looks like Luke Perry.

“And he seemed very interested in you when we got our orders from him earlier. And didn’t you tell me he was well endowed?”

I did? “Mm. He may look like a unicorn, but is just a slutty horse.” I dismiss him with a wave of my hand.

Ollie snorts. “Okay. How about Gabe’s stunts, then?”

“Stunts?” I repeat slowly, adding a tone of ridicule to the word. “Is that appropriate college lingo, mate? How about coitus preferences? Copulating tastes? Mating proclivities?”

He flips me off with a stifled smile. “Carnal inclinations.”

I open my mouth to keep joking around, but he continues, “You didn’t tell me anything, dude, which is not like you. I know you have memories of what happened. Are they too painful? I shouldn’t push, sorry.”

“The pain was unbearable.” A light shiver runs down my spine at the memory. “And the pleasure out of this world,” I confess.

“Gabe has been sending me a text every day since the club,” Ollie lets me know, talking so fast I can hardly understand him.

The idea of Ollie receiving messages from Gabe every sodding day irritates me grandly since I haven’t heard a pip from him. After what we went through together, I’d expected a bit of consideration from him. I got nothing.

“Look at you getting all chummy with him,” I hiss.

“The texts were about you,” my bestie continues, leaving me speechless. “He asks every day if you’re okay.”

His last word makes me jerk back like a slap to the face. Gabe cares about my well-being? Why did he contact Ollie and not me?

“What happened between you two? I thought he only *helped* you in a difficult moment, you know, a one-time thing.” He looks confused. I am as

well.

“It was a one-time thing. But it was also...different,” I say lamely, not knowing how to explain what I’m bloody going through.

“Different because of the situation or because of Gabe?”

“Definitely both.” I sigh. “He stirred up something in me. My sexual appetite.” I wince at my word choice.

“You want to smash Gabe...again?” His eyes widen with surprise.

Do I? “If I get more stirred up, I’ll turn into a frozen yogurt, the one with sprinkles and chocolate chips.”

Ollie suddenly slaps the small table. “I always thought there was something there between you two! Your dislike was too strong.”

“Please!” I shake my head at him. “I disliked him because he acts like a superior jerk to me.”

“Disliked...past tense?” He smirks smugly. Idiot. But do I still dislike Gabe after what happened?

A disgusting sight distracts me from my scary thoughts. “Bloody hell, stop slopping mayo on your sandwich!” I scold him. My bestie retaliates by adding even more heart-attack sauce on his food and then proceeds to take a bite and chew it with his mouth open, knowing very well that’s one of my biggest pet peeves.

“In My Head” by the Queens of the Stonage start playing in the café, and I hum with it. *Love this band.*

“How do you feel?” Ollie suddenly asks, thankfully after swallowing.

“Oh, so this is why you wanted to meet me before the others.” I narrow my eyes at him.

“Your sassy replies don’t work on me, Lor. Answer the question.”

Having a person that knows you so well isn’t always good. “You’re such an *askhole*

“And you’re another kind of a-hole. Now spit it out,” he snarks back.

“I’m having dreams,” I mumble, making him frown.

“Repeat that using a tone that can be detected by human ears,” Ollie deadpans.

“I’m having dreams!” I whisper-yell with annoyance.

“What kind of dreams?”

“The kind that, as I wake up in the morning, I don’t even need to check my underwear to know the beaver got beaten...without actually getting beaten.”

“You mean.” He makes a jerking-off gesture with his hand, and I nod.
“Wow. Every night?”

“It hadn’t happened since I was a teenager.” I love sex and the tornado of uncontrollable, pleasurable physical feelings that come with it. But this new kind of desire is like a powerful yearning. An urge so overwhelming that can only be fulfilled with sex. It’s exciting and scary at the same time.

“And on top of that, I’ve woken up on the floor, in the shower. Everywhere but the bed.”

“Sleepwalking again?” He knows about my past episodes well. He has found me several times in the past doing absurd stuff like cooking or wearing boxers under a somnambulism spell.

“I lock myself inside the bedroom at night. But everything looks the same around me in the morning. Except me.”

It takes a few seconds for Ollie to speak again. “You’ve always fornicated like a satanic squirrel, maybe the drug unlocked a deeper part of your slutty rodent brain.”

I flip him off.

Then why don’t I want to go fuck—what’s the barista’s name again?—even though I know he’s damn good at that and he’ll jump at it if I ask him?

I've never been much into self-reflection. All this thinking is driving me nuts.

"I'll go home tonight," I tell Ollie.

"You don't need to."

"Apart from the sleepwalking, I have an eviction notice. I need to pack and look for another place to live—a place that allows pets."

"You don't. You have your gran's house waiting for you to go back to..."

Every word he's saying feels like acid pouring in my gut. I cut him off. "You know why I can't go back there," I hiss between gritted teeth.

"Then sell it!" he insists. Relentless sod.

"I can't," I growl.

"Lori. You hardly have any money and you live in squalor—"

"Stop. Just stop!" I raise my voice and bang my fist on the table. The harsh sound catches the attention of some of the people sitting around us, making them turn around. "Oh, bugger off!" I snap at them, glaring at the ones still daring to stare.

Fuck! I close my eyes and take a long breath. "I'm sorry." Then I whisper to Ollie, "I just... Now is not the time for that." When I lift my eyes, Ollie's lips have turned into a thin line, but his eyes are filled with understanding and I hope regret, and not pity. I concentrate on the brown spot covering half of his green iris in his left eye. A clear imperfection that turns his green gaze into something so familiar.

"Okay, but let me at least help you. Stay with us." He turns a pleading look my way.

"I have Wednesday, and she can't live with Pink. Imagine the daily bloody brawls."

"I'd put my money on my cat." A tiny smile makes his lips twitch. Thank the Lord.

“You have your hands full already...with your husband’s dick. Also, Brad needs a bed since his father is a twat. And Sully still has nightmares.”

“Yeah, don’t know what to do about my brother anymore.” His voice is filled with worry.

“Let him go to college next semester. Let him live on the campus.”

“He barely goes out.”

“He’s a nerd. He’ll do it for a chance at studying. Rami will keep a cyber eye on him, and we’ll take turns to go visit him. He needs to fight his fears and find his way.”

He nods and covers my hand with his on the table. I push down the impulse to pull it back. I still can’t seem to tolerate being touched.

“You’re right, I have to trust that he can work things out for himself.” Is he talking about Sully or me?

“You’re a sneaky bastard, you know that?” I huff. He squeezes my hand and then lets it go, getting back to his uneatable sandwich.

“Hi, Oliver, right?” A guy suddenly appears near our table. “Jeff. We have a couple of classes together.” He’s tall, tanned, and handsome—and he knows it.

“Oh, hi.” Ollie makes his I-don’t-remember-who-you-are-but-I’m-pretending-to face.

“Haven’t seen you at uni for a while which, was a bummer since I wanted to get your number.” He leans toward Ollie and gives him an inviting smile, showing clearly what else he wants to get.

Still is nice to have it spelled out, right? “What for?” I ask him.

Tall and tanned gives me a smug smile and then turns to my bestie again. “To get together. Have some fun.” His voice lowers to sultry city on the word *fun*. The fact that he’s flirting so openly with Ollie makes me think that a) he’s never seen KKJ, which is weird since Rague goes to pick up Ollie every single bloody time just to show to the whole University he’s

taken, owned. His. Which takes me to option b) this guy is suicidal. Rague will peel him like a banana and then make a puree out of him.

“I’m married,” Ollie says.

Jeff looks at me. “Not to me. I’m not his ball and chain,” I tell him.

“I have a boyfriend, no problem at all there. We can still have *discreet* fun together. You can come too,” he tells me as he slides his phone on the table and lets his hand fall on Ollie’s arm. “Give me your number.”

My bestie turns rigid, a second away from breaking this bloke’s fingers—he certainly doesn’t need his husband’s help to do that.

A plan starts to form in my mind. I look at tall and tanned, and wink. “Oliver here is too shy, but we do need some fun. Let me help us all.”

I grab the bloke’s phone and register the number in his contacts.

Ollie stares at me suspiciously, but doesn’t say anything. He knows all about my malevolent mind—and that I’ve got his back.

“Later, Oliver and friend.” With a last dirty smile, he goes to a table a few feet away from us.

“Well, Oliver,” I drawl his name, “aren’t you the slutty working bee?”

“Fuck off. Don’t even know who that joker is.” He drinks his orange juice, glaring at me as he sucks the liquid through the straw. “What did you do, Lori?”

“Whatever do you mean?” I feign ignorance, looking at my sunshine-yellow painted nails.

“You’re full of shit! I hope for your sake that Rague never gets a whiff of this.”

Oh, but I hope he fucking does.

Tall and tanned suddenly clears his throat, and I look as he mouths the words “check your phone” to Ollie.

A phone beeps, but it's not Ollie's, it's Rague's. He's making his way through the tables as he grabs his cell from his jeans to check his texts. He stops his huge bod near us, blocking the view to the other tables, his brows even more bunched up than usual. My smirk turns into a fully bloomed, devilish smile.

"Why did I just get a text from someone saying that my greedy green eyes are as beautiful as emeralds in the morning light?"

I can't help a low chuckle. I'm not even slightly sorry about it. What can I say? I thrive in watching cocky twat's pain.

"Fuck, Lor!" Ollie jumps from his chair to face his husband. "It's just a prank."

"Yeah, just a guy who wants to have a threesome with Ollie and me," I say casually.

"Lori!" Ollie barks at me. "I swear I'll ruin your damn nail polish..."

Another beep from Rague's phone stops my bestie's empty threat. Rague's face turns to granite, and his eyes fill with murder.

"Who?" he growls at me, and I have to admit the rumbling sound makes my legs shake for a second.

I point at tall and tanned, whose smile is quickly falling off his face.

"Don't fucking move, Kitty." Rague tosses his phone on the table and spins around, incredibly swift for a man of his great size. Each charging step he takes toward the bloke—who looks frozen in his chair—is grim and filled with menace.

I look down at Rague's phone on the table, and I see a picture of a very hard, leaning-to-the-left dick pointing at the screen, followed by the text, "Looking forward to filling your mouth, Oliver." Tall and tanned went from a cheesy approach to a very filthy one within a few seconds.

A snort leaves my mouth because this is exceeding-all-expectations brilliant.

My eyes go back to Rague just in time to see him yank the bloke off his chair and lift his trembling body high. Higher until they are face-to-face. Rague is growling something at him when Ollie jumps and wraps his body around him to stop him from maiming the bloke.

Should I defuse the situation? What the fuck am I thinking, of course not. I'm sure it'll be fine.

Rague abruptly lets go of tall and tanned. And I watch his body hit the floor with a thud. He quickly starts crawling out of the café as I stand up to address the puzzled or utterly afraid people around us.

“Gather some mental decorum, people. It’s just a lover’s spat!” My voice quivers with suppressed amusement, but I’m successful in stifling my chuckle. Surely I have been convincing enough, as the customers turn to do their own thing—some of them still frowning with disapproval.

I sit back, feeling so damn high. This has been exhilaratingly splendid!

“He fell on the floor like a bag of potatoes! Bam!” I tell Ollie, when they return to sit at the table. Rague is holding my bestie on his lap in a tight grip.

Ollie glowers at me. “You suck.”

“Not for free, mate,” I counter, earning an angry growl from Rague. Damn, the jealous gorilla.

“Bitch!”

“What are you complaining about? Your husband is going to drill you into the car seat in a few minutes. You should thank me.” I cross my arms on my chest, daring Ollie to protest.

“What’s going on?” Sari’s voice reaches us from behind. His pale blue eyes flicker from me to Ollie and Rague, waiting for an explanation.

“Lori is being a dick, as usual,” Ollie mutters.

“I thought I was a bitch.” I huff, and then let out a chuckle, remembering how tall and tanned cockroached his way out of the café.

“Are you laughing at me, or is it just a discharge of nervous energy?” Bless Sari and his oblivious, genius brain.

“Rague manhandled a fucker who was probably hitting on Ollie,” Uri says, coming up behind Sari. His long dreads are tied in a ponytail today, and his facial piercings shine under the natural light. He’s extremely handsome aaand annoying.

“How do you know?” Rague asks him.

“Saw you from the store window.” Uri pulls a chair out for Sari and then sits next to him, placing his arm on the back of Sari’s. “You should tell Rami to take care of the café security cameras, just in case the guy decides to sue you.”

“Also tell him to send the bloke’s boyfriend this picture.” I grab Rague’s phone and tilt it Uri’s way, showing him the dick picture still visible on the screen.

Sari gets an eyeful too, and his cheeks turn red. He grabs the end of his long braid with both hands as he keeps staring at the cell.

“He certainly earned your wrath, Rague.” Then Uri adds in a mocking tone, “You’re a very bad boy, Ollie.”

“Fuck you!” he replies, tightening his arms around Rague’s tense body. They start kissing and whispering mushy stuff. I think I hear a sugary, gag-inducing “You deserve the universe and all its treasure, Kitty.”

Soon, I’ll witness chirping birds flying out of Ollie’s butt, helping him to get dressed like fucking Cinderella while his gorilla prince fixes the kingdom with his rat friends.

Ollie has become so tamed. Doesn’t know how to fuck with people anymore. Rague’s dicking turned him dumb. So, the responsibility falls entirely on my shoulders. And I know an undoubtedly infallible way to mess with Uri: Sari.

“I have to go shopping. Angel, I think you need to buy a few items too.”

“Um. What kind of items?” Sari looks at me with interest. Since I painted his nails and introduced him to my yoga lessons, he’s been eager to discover new things with me—which drives the overprotective Super Model, Uri *nutso*.

“Lingerie. Rami said you’d like to try lace?” I lean toward him and lower my voice, being extra certain Uri can hear. I owe him for being kind of an arsehole 24/7.

“Y-yea.” Sari gets closer to me, he looks embarrassed but on the edge of his seat metaphorically and literally.

“I wear jockstraps, they are easy if you...bottom,” I say, enjoying deeply the way Uri is gritting his teeth.

“A twink with a jockstrap.” Uri sniffs airily.

The sudden sound of Rague’s chair scraping over the floor makes me turn toward him. Keeping Ollie wrapped around him, he leaves the table and they make their way out of the café without saying a word.

“Where are they going?” Sari asks.

“To shag,” I tell him. He nods a bit shyly, while Uri doesn’t bat an eyelash hearing my answer, we are all blasé with all the fucking going around with the brothers. “So, what would you prefer to wear?”

Unaware of Uri’s irritation, Sari tells me, “Hunter tears the lace off Rami. That sounds...sexy.”

“My angel is turning into a vixen. Papa Lori’s job is almost done.” I wipe away a fake tear while Sari lets out a small giggle. Men must climb on top of each other to reach all that innocence. It tempted me when I first met him, but the watchful guard dog near him halted any smidge of desire I had.

I grab my phone from my bag hanging from the chair and quickly find the online store I usually buy from. “This is a great website to get lingerie from, once you know what style you prefer.”

Sari opens his mouth, but Uri’s bitter words shut him up. “That’s ridiculous. You don’t need...this!”

I expect Sari to hunch back and turn silent, and he does that for a moment. But in the next, he straightens his back and turns to his stepbrother. “I don’t need it, I want it. Like I want to look pretty and-and feel sexy when I go out on a date!”

“Damn,” I exclaim.

“Date?” Uri spits the word out. “With whom?”

“None of your business. I’m not a child, and I’ll wear lacy panties or even none at all if I like. Back. Off.”

“No!” he growls menacingly, getting closer to Sari. “I have every fucking right with you.”

“Why? Because you’re my brother?” Sari tilts his torso toward him until there’s only an inch between their faces. Wow, seeing him so combative is a new development.

“The fuck, I am,” Uri replies with an angry grunt.

Bleeding hell! Is Uri into Sari? I can almost see the sparks of sexual tension flying from them, creating small explosions in the surrounding air. I’ve always seen Uri’s overbearingly protective attitude toward Sari as a sociopathic, twisted kind of brotherly love, but perhaps it’s just the top of the iceberg—a very complicated iceberg. Or maybe my horny glasses are showing me a distorted reality.

The stare battle keeps going until Uri’s phone starts ringing, and he utters a “Fuck!” as he glances at his phone.

“This is not the end of this conversation,” he hisses, his heated eyes falling on Sari’s lips before he pushes away from the table.

“Hens need clucking without a pompous rooster in the group. Go find a worm!” I tell his back as he leaves to answer the call.

“A group of hens is called a brood,” Rague corrects me as he comes back holding hands with a very rumpled Ollie.

“Already back? Didn’t take you for a quick popper, KKJ.” I wink at him, knowing very well he isn’t. I’ve heard him going at Ollie for fucking hours

before they soundproofed their bedroom.

“Let’s go get you something to eat, Beastie, before you drop Lori on the floor this time.”

Ollie pulls on his husband’s hand, and Rague lets him as he mutters, “That stupid fucker deserved to be melted in one of my barrels of acid.”

Pretty sure he meant tall and tanned, and not me. Still, I’m glad they have left me alone with Sari. I have a few things I need to ask him without having the others butt in.

He looks lost in his head but replies straight away when I ask, “Do you think there’s a possibility I’m still feeling some effects from the drug?”

“Hard to say. What are your symptoms?”

Might as well tell him everything. “Um, I’m mad horny, but at the same time, don’t like to be touched.”

“Hypersensitivity is quite normal after what you went through. It will wear off.”

“Yeah?” I release a relieved breath. “I thought I was holding a one-way ticket to Madville.”

“Not at all.” He shakes his head vehemently. “You’ve been overwhelmed with sensations, and while your mind is trying to process them, the body pushes away new ones.”

“Then why am I turned on most of the time? Even when I sleep.” I whisper the last part.

“Concupiscent dreams. A couple of people who were dosed with this drug had the same issue. Meg and I believe it’s because your brain floated on such high levels of oxytocin after all the intercourse, that it craves it back.”

“Like an addict?”

“Exactly. The intervals of pain that you suffered increased the pleasure enormously, which acted like an analgesic. That’s why your mind is trying to relive it and sleeping is the perfect moment because you’re utterly

relaxed. Especially during REM phase, your brain activity looks very similar to brain activity while you're awake."

"So my mind and body are totally fucked up at the moment." I don't want to be touched, but I crave a dicking. One dick in particular. "In other words I'm dickmatized," I suddenly exclaim, slumping back into my chair. "His good dick cast a spell and took control over me!"

"Gabe's?" Sari looks for confirmation.

I nod.

"Again, it's kind of comprehensible to become attached to the person who you shared this kind of predicament with."

"If you mean I want to attach his cock to my ass permanently, yeah that's it. And it has to be the drug." Unless being dickmatized is a real thing.

"This drug disappears quickly from a person's system because of all the perspiration while having sex and the multiple orgasms. I presume you sustained them both."

"You presume correctly, Angel." A memory of Gabe's muscular chest covered in beads of sweat, the small drops trickling down his defined abs as he plowed roughly into me, pops into my head. His gray eyes filled with raw pleasure as he came inside me. My cock twitches, and I feel the *perspiration* hitting me again.

"It happened three days ago, Lori. Give yourself some time. And if the symptoms don't go away, I think you should talk to—"

"Meg?" I interject.

"Gabe," he says instead.

I snort at Sari's advice. I tried calling him. He didn't pick up that damn phone, and his twit of a new PA told me that Mr. Reed was too busy to take my calls. But he has time to send texts to Ollie regarding my health. He's so bloody irritating!

"What are we talking about?" Ollie utters, sitting back down at the table, followed by Rague.

My unfailing brain spits out a quick reply. “If I’m the twink in this relationship and you’re the twunk. Are we the twink-twunk besties? Or the bestwinks? Bestwunks?”

“Who died and made you king of naming things?” Uri asks snarkily, taking his seat near Sari again.

Rague lets out a grunt. “You know he names everything.”

“KKJ is right. My dick’s name is Robert unless it’s chilly, then it’s Bert. Very cold Bob.” I wink at him. Sari giggles while Uri mutters something, but I’m too taken by the sight of a familiar figure with long black hair standing outside the café on the opposite sidewalk.

I hear Ollie’s huff. “So glad we arrived for the mature part of the conversation.” I’m tempted to stick my tongue out, but that would only be proving his point.

“I’ll grab a coffee; anyone want something?” Sari asks.

I shake my head. “The barista, Luke.”

“Noah,” Ollie corrects me for some idiotic reason.

“I happen to know is very good. Go for it, Angel. He looks like a lace ripper,” I purr.

Sari’s smile falls as soon as Uri grabs his arm and pulls him toward the counter, holding him close. Now I can see there’s something more between the bros. That’s hot.

I glance back outside. Chimney, the bloke that attacked me in the underground garage, is still there. His eyes on the café window where I’m sitting. Coincidence?

“Ollie, do you remember when I told you about the prick that jumped me after work a few days ago?” I use a casual tone.

Rague hums, taking a bite of his burrito.

“You just hinted at it on the phone, while yesterday, you went on and on about your crazy theory that your landlord is a pod person for an hour.”

“But he must be, always checking my ass out like he wants to probe it! Those beady eyes and that freakishly long tongue.”

“Tell me everything!” He uses a commanding tone, to which I sigh.

“I thought I did. I mean he also has very small feet. I—”

“Not your disgusting landlord. The guy that jumped you!”

“Oh, okay.” I start the retelling of the attack, embellishing it with my flawless narrative skills.

“He’s outside right now,” I add when I’m done.

“He is?” Rague frowns, but doesn’t turn to look.

“Not so casually smoking a cigarette near the post office.” Hence the name chimney. He must smoke at least a couple of packs to stink that much.

“You got a stalker? That’s creepy,” Ollie states as Rague’s big body moves closer to him—he activated protective mode.

“How many times do I have to remind you that you stalked your hubby?”

“That was different... I didn’t have any disturbing thoughts.” Ollie’s eyes fall on his juice cup.

“Please, you had a taste of his gorilla cock and craved more. If that isn’t a dirty thought—”

“Dirty, not disturbing,” he cuts me off, looking all offended.

“Let’s focus on the current stalker,” Rague interjects.

“Where’s Reacher? Isn’t he coming?” I ask.

“Rami is busy with Opal and Hunter intercepting another shipment of drugs. He’s trying his hardest to stop Phoenix’s minions from testing it on people. Another two patients have ended up in the hospital with your same symptoms in the last three days.”

Damn it. I really hope they had a Gabe as well near them when they were dosed. The thought of being alone and defenseless in the hands of

malevolent strangers makes dread and fear try to engulf me. Rami is right; we have to stop them.

“We need to talk about what to do going forward. You bros keep telling me to rest, which enrages me. I want to whack people.”

“Did you just use the word *whack*?” Ollie sounds incredulous.

“Yes, it needs to have a glorious comeback.” I skip the duh at the end.

“No, it needs to stay where it is, in Oblivion City.”

“I still want to whack people, preferably the ones related to my predicament,” I spit out between my gritted teeth.

“How? The brothers are all insanely protective morons,” Ollie agrees with me, sending a glare toward his husband.

“Kitty, you’re still angry about me trying to stop you from going into the sex club. But I didn’t, you went in and got Lori back,” Rague patiently says, grabbing Ollie’s hand. “My insanely protective side is for your own good.”

“Said the red haze monster,” I cough the words inside my fist. Can’t believe he wanted to make my bestie wait outside when he’s a great fighter.

“Rague is much better now!” Ollie comes to his hubby’s defense, but then turns to him with a scowl, “Don’t you ever try to keep me out again!”

“Let’s get back to the stalker.” Rague looks eager to change topic.

“Let’s ask Serena. Rami has already too much on his plate.” I shake my head at Ollie’s suggestion and dial Dare’s number instead.

“I have a better idea.”

“Lori,” he answers the phone straight away.

“Hey, Offspring Three. How is it, working for Reacher?” Dare started working for Rami at his video game design company and has sort of learned the hacker part as well to help as a cyber techie at Hunter and Opal’s P.I. agency.

“Great.” Dare isn’t the talkative type, but between his two bros yakking on and on all day I do understand his inclination to silence.

“Hey, Lori.”

“Clover-bell?”

“Yep.”

Clover is a very skilled thief who works for the bros at times. His peculiar behavior, lack of filter, and at times, tactless and logical thinking call to me. He’s a straight-up weirdo, not the best at reading facial cues. We have shot the shit a few times and bond over rock music and gory movies.

“Didn’t know you were back, mate. How was Japan?”

“Rainy and sweet,” is his odd reply. “Letting the darkness into your soul is bad chakra, by the way.”

“Uh, wise words. Where do they come from?” I ask.

“Dunno. I think I heard it in a movie once, and after Rami told me what happened to you, I thought it was fitting.” See what I mean? Impossible not to get sucked in by his nonsense.

“Okay. I’m calling because I need Dare to find out who my stalker is.” I see Ollie opening his arms toward the sky in what looks like a strength-seeking prayer.

“Your yoga marble ass strikes again,” Clover cheers.

“Indeed.” I smile proudly.

“Like having a stalker is a goal everybody should aspire to.” Ash’s irritated statement hits my ear.

“Offspring One! How’s your horrible day going?” Ash is rude, boorish, and always annoyed by something. Classic teenaged boy.

“Fucking late for my shift at the tattoo parlor,” he grumbles. He started working at a shop not so far from my apartment. Uri put in a good word with the owners. But Ash has talent, so much that I’m thinking to let him ink me next.

“Ash’s car broke down,” Clover explains.

“And I’m fucking waiting for someone to tell me where his car keys are,” Ash hisses.

“On the table behind you,” Dare replies, unbothered by his brother’s mood.
“Lori, do you have a place for me? For the stalker.”

“The Loop District, State Street. He’s standing near a post office, on a side street in front of Hot&Cold Café.”

“Hold,” Dare says through the phone. “Getting inside the security cameras of the establishments nearby. Can you give me a description of the stalker?”

“Tall, long black hair, gray skinny jeans, brown pointed-toe cowboy boots, horrid, red sunglasses on his head. Need I go on?”

“Got him. Having Serena run facial recognition.”

“Going out next week?” Clover asks.

“Yeah! With you,” I reply.

“Ronny Salas, thirty years old, works at the docks. Went to prison...once for assault. Suspected of killing an ex-girlfriend, but never got arrested; he had an alibi.”

“A sleazy dude,” Clover comments.

“Thanks. And keep this among us, please,” I tell Dare. Don’t want the bros’ sausage fest to ruin my style. They’ll find out soon enough when Rague spills the beans.

“Got it,” Dare replies. I don’t need to wait for an answer from Clover, I trust him.

“Ta-ta.” I hang up and tell Rague and Ollie what Dare found out.

“I think I’ll go have a chat with my stalker,” I say suddenly.

“Is this one of your knee-jerk reactions?” Ollie leans toward me.

“If you want to be literal, mate,” I joke, while thinking that a knee in the balls is not such a bad suggestion. He grabs his backpack and silently passes me his brass knucks under the table.

“Wait for Uri. He’s outside.” Rague points at the store window on the street where Uri and Sari are fighting again by the way they’re glaring at each other. Again, with this overprotective madness.

“It looks like it is going to take a while. I don’t want the stalker to leave!”

“I’ll come with you, then,” Rague says.

“Fuck no! Don’t need a bodyguard.” I’m going to ambush the fucker this time.

“You sure? Gabe helped you in the parking garage,” he reminds me. Jerk!

“Look at all the potential suitors ogling your Kitty.” I move my arm around the room. “Are you sure you want to leave him defenseless and theirs for the taking?” I see Ollie’s green eyes roll in my periphery as I’m tricking his husband into staying put. He deserves it.

And when Rague mumbles something sulkily under his breath, taking a slow glaring look around the café in a way that surely has the men here shaking in their boots, I know I got to him. It’s so easy to manipulate him.

I quickly sneak toward the bathrooms where the backdoor exit is. I push the door open and find myself in a narrow alley. I wear the brass knuckles as my ankle boots take me to the end of the narrow street, but when I peek out to the sidewalk, Chimney is not there.

“Damn it to hell!” I curse as I make my way out onto the street. I look right and left, but nothing. I glance at Ollie and Rague through the store window, but they shake their heads at me. Uri and Sari are nowhere to be seen.

I was looking forward to venting all my sexual frustration on that stalkerish bellend. Now I’m grandly pissed off.

I grab my phone and call Dare again. But he can’t find my stalker anywhere. It’s all in Serena’s hands now.

Big, hairy, asymmetrical bollocks!



The next day I'm at the firm. Gabe is still not answering his phone, so I decided to go directly to the egotistical, supercilious source. I exit the elevator at the top of the lord's castle and smile at a busy Belinda at the reception desk.

Gabe runs a tight ship, if this was eighteen hundred there would be torch-wielding villagers outside. But he's quite fair when he needs to be.

I don't know how to interpret his contradictory behavior toward me. Does he want to leave the whole occurrence behind? Avoiding me doesn't seem like him though.

Does he have *concupiscent* dreams assailing him at night as well? I still feel like an oversexed poodle. I can't let myself think about it, about the way he fucked me. Our hips aligned, grinding. His fingers tightening around my wrists where he pinned them over my head. His hard body holding me down. His long—enough!

Gabe is tall, yes. And strong—didn't expect those defined abs on him or that monstrously long dick that can hit my prostate just right. He has a face that might remind me of a beautiful, sadistic angel. He commands attention and has a stern voice that makes shivers run down my spine. Am I making a point? Or just listing all the things that make my dick twitch when I think about him?

Ugh!

The truth is that he took a front-row red-velvet seat in my mind. But as Sari said, it's totally normal. A few more days, a visit to my favorite club, and a ride on a stranger's lap, and I'll be good as new. I won't be utterly taken by this infatuation anymore, because it will be gone.

I tell my brain to take a hike and remind myself why I came to Gabe's office.

I have to thank him for what he did. And I need to do it face-to-face because the moment I see him, I'll remember why I disliked him so much, and it'll feel like closure to this whole mess—this and beating Mr. Hot Shot into a pulp. So, even if Gabe doesn't want to meet me, I'm going to shove my appreciation for what he did down his throat.

I stop in front of his PA's desk. She doesn't look up. Her fingers sound like a battle march on the plastic keyboard. Her shiny, blonde hair is loose on her narrow shoulders, falling down her generous cleavage, which is covered by a silk and very revealing white camisole. I can see her long legs peeking out under the desk; her red high heels are stilettos.

Now I understand why Gabe went to Evelyn's office to hand pick his new PA. This must be what he likes? Blonde, voluptuous, and sending Medusa vibes? My complete opposite.

Crikey! Who cares. Who CARES!

I already loathe her for the way she dismissed me over the phone. But then her cold eyes give me a quick, disdainful once-over—surely finding me lacking since slutty PA is definitely not my style—before rudely going back to her computer. Wicked, murderous feelings start to spread inside my chest.

After a long minute of me staring at her, she asks, “Can I help...you?” Her voice couldn’t have been more uninterested and fake.

I take a big breath and remind myself that clawing Medusa’s face, although it would give me unimaginable pleasure, it would also ruin my silver pearl nails. “Lori Boone, I want to talk to G—the boss.”

She keeps clacking on that infernal keyboard as she replies, “You don’t have an appointment.”

She’s just pouring fuel on my blazing temper with her snobbish attitude. Evelyn must be really scraping the bottom of the PA’s barrel. “I tried to make an appointment over the phone a few days back, but you told me that his earliest free slot is in two months.”

“And for you, it is.” She emphasizes the *you*. Does she hate me on principal, or has Gabe instigated her against me? The thought irritates me

even more. Like smoldering coals, my anger keeps burning under the surface until the flames reach the tips of my fingers.

I press a hand on her desk and lean threateningly toward her. My smile is evilly sweet. “I don’t need an appointment, dearie.” I filled the endearment with poison. “And before you move the filler in your lips again, have you ever noticed that assistant has the words ass and ant in it? I admire ants, they are very hard workers and can carry twenty times their weight. But when someone makes an ass of themselves, it is just deeply...vexing. And do you know what I do to people that vex me?” I pause for effect, and it works beautifully. “I get even.”

She has plastered herself to the back of her chair, eyes wide as she grips the armrest tightly.

I straighten back up and smooth my red shorts before talking to her again. “Now do your bloody job properly by announcing my presence to your boss. Because I’m going to get inside that office whether you do it or not.”

She scoffs and swallows, but I hear her hurriedly tell “Mr. Reed” through the intercom on her desk that a very rude and inappropriate man is about to enter his office as I approach the door. She utters the word security, but indifferent to the threat, I turn the knob anyway and push. It’s not until I hear Gabe’s deep voice that my pulse kicks in my jugular.

“Don’t. It’s fine,” he says, using his unfazed tone. My dick twitches and stands to attention, like he recognizes his sole master. My pucker clenches involuntarily. He fucked me so long and so deeply four days ago that I shouldn’t want him again. Ever again.

But one look at him sitting behind the enormous desk, and I feel hot, heavy anticipation building in the pit of my stomach. I stare at him hungrily. Four days without even a glimpse and I feel starved for him.

Get a bloody grip, Lori!

He pins me with a dry and somehow heated look. In the sunlight, his eyes have a sparkly gray hue, anchoring me right where I stand.

He slowly stands, looking dangerous and ruthless. He has a way of moving that resembles a big cat, a fluidity in his hips that makes me recall the way

he fucked me. Raw.

I was out of my mind but still enjoyed his bareback dick inside me. That perfect-sized cock—thickness, length, hardness. Fuck! I want to feel it again. In my mouth this time. My cock has its own heartbeat as Gabe comes closer. My reaction to him is as vibrant and strong as ever. And that's when an icy cold sensation starts to run through my veins, as I get a hard punch of reality to the face.

I want him.

This is not an infatuation. And I don't think it'll go away. I'm not even fully aware what it means, but I feel it burning low in my gut. And in the nearly irresistible need to open my legs for him. There's a twitch in my thighs, but I don't move as he rounds his desk and halts a few feet from me.

"Is there a reason why you are barging into my office?" His voice is flat, but his eyes slide down my body like a long, wet lick of his tongue.

His words register, and my brain finally decides to get on board. "I wouldn't have if you'd let me talk to you for a damn minute."

He frowns slightly, and his hands move to grab the edge of the desk. "Here's your minute."

"I just wanted to say thank you, you insufferable bastard," I hiss, taking a step closer.

The silence in the room is deafening after my confession. He just keeps staring at me, looking tense.

Fuck this! Fuck my body and its horny urges.

"Why do I even bother? Maybe I should have written a card and shoved it between your PA's tits, that would have surely gotten your attention," I bark, feeling bile rising up in my throat. "Don't worry, we'll pretend it never happened. I hardly remember any of it anyway,"

His demeanor suddenly changes; it's subtle, but I can...feel it. And see it in his blazing gaze and the wicked curve of his lips. His voice seems different when he talks. "I've finger fucked that tight hole and then come all over

you. Your sweet ass still bears the imprint of my dick. Just like your memories do. It fucking happened, Little Wasp.”

The nickname catapults me back to that night, to the utter and raw relief that taking him inside me brought, like his cock was the answer to all my prayers. The sensation spreads throughout my body, and for a second, I’m floating. Gabe’s lips tilt up at one corner as he studies me, and I’m shocked all over by his willingness to show any kind of emotion.

Once I stop having a stroke from his sexy as fuck—but also confusing—fucked-up response, my ability to speak finally returns. Is he screwing with me?

Folding my arms across my chest, I tilt my chin up. Have to because of our height difference anyway, but I’m sure he knows I mean business. “That was...” The word epic comes to mind, but I toss it away like a pair of bell-bottom trousers. “...an extraordinary circumstance.”

“Sure.” Is he being sarcastic? He tilts his head to one side, keeping that piercing gaze on me. I feel like he’s trying to read my thoughts.

“A one-time thing,” I keep saying, which I’d love to repeat two—three—twenty more times.

He hums noncommittally.

“What game are you playing?” I ask him. He’s acting like a totally different person. Still a jerk, but more cocky and less uptight. “What is...this?”

My eyes fall on the two open buttons of his white shirt. My mouth floods with drool, remembering how his bare skin tasted against my tongue as I sucked on his exposed torso, bare shoulders, and warm neck. All that skin pressed up against my back.

When his arms drew away from me, and his tip left my hole, slipping free of my body, a sense of loss almost crushed my soul.

What. The. Bloody. Fuck.

I need to leave. I came to say what I wanted to say. And I did. But instead of finding closure, I feel like I lost something. My sanity perhaps. Nah, that

was gone a long time ago.

Medusa's annoying voice comes through the intercom, making me jump, "Mr. Reed, Mr. Dorridge—" Her voice is drowned out by the sound of the door banging open and the stomping arrival of one of the Skid Mark's brothers covered in neon green goo on his hair, face, hands, and jacket. He looks like a fluorescent firefly. I'd forgotten about the package I sent him a few days back. This is ace! It's amazing what a mega-size tube of slime and some springs can do.

The arsehole looks spectacularly ridiculous. That's what he gets for cornering the shy new intern. She's nineteen, for fuck's sake. I guess being groping creeps is in the family genes.

I can't stifle my snort, revealing my presence to his angry eyes.

"I want him fired!" He throws his arm out, finger pointing at me.

"Is it arsehole day today? I didn't get the memo," I mumble, and I see Gabe turn a chilly look my way.

"Bart, I hope you have a valid reason to storm into my office like this a second time." His voice is back to its monotonic flatness.

"Look at me! Isn't it obvious? That little shit did this!" He's spitting his fury all around.

"Where's your brother? I'd like to have another chat with him and his desk," I taunt him. He needs his face smashed a second time for sure.

"Like you don't know he was fired, you piece of shit!"

Fired?

He takes a step toward me, but Gabe's commanding tone stops him. "Lower your voice, Bart. I won't allow this kind of behavior in my firm."

"This kind of behavior?" Skid Mark is going ape, flailing his arms around and yelling. "I'm covered in fucking paint!"

"Slime," I correct him, sucking my lips inward for letting that slip.

He lets out an irate huff. "I knew it was you!"

“Just stating a fact,” I say in a bored tone.

“He broke my brother’s nose and dislocated his wrist.” He turns to Gabe again.

“He let my numerous rejections whoosh right over his head. I just wanted to move away from his sticky fingers, but he decided that an inch was all I really needed for my own personal space. He denied my rights and was in need of a practical lesson.”

“My brother is not a fag!” Skid Mark vehemently states.

I chuckle. “A fag? You mean a funny amazing guy? Certainly not! He’s a repulsive, middle-aged prick with a fixation for egg salad and men’s butts.”

“You’ll get what you deserve. Soon, you will,” he hisses.

Was that a threat? A very lame one. Because you don’t grow up being unapologetically me without leaving a long trail of pissed-off people behind.

“The egg salad must be another family trait. Woof!” I wave my hand in front of my face to clear the air.

“You’re fired!” Gabe’s abrupt statement makes my body freeze. I slowly turn my head toward him, ready to fire the flame of hell and try to melt the iceberg he has inside his chest, when I realize his eyes are not on me.

“What?” Skid Mark gasps. “You’re firing me? After what he did?”

“Do you have proof, Bart?” Gabe questions him, using his uninterested tone. To be fair, Bart doesn’t need proof, everybody knows it was me. So, why is Gabe defending me? Again?

“Don’t need proof.” The *lawyer*, in a *law* firm, in front of his *boss*, says there’s no need for proof.

“Don’t tell people you’re a lawyer,” Gabe steals the words from my mouth, making me snort and smile at him. It’s as if, for a moment, something passes between us. Camaraderie?

Then he scolds me, “Silence.” The smile falls from my lips, and I roll my eyes so hard, I see the back of my head.

“He has a record!” Skid Mark suddenly declares.

Dear Lords and their horses. This guy is dead from the neck up.

“Public disorderly conduct. I check all my employees before hiring them,” Gabe lets us know, staring intently at Bart’s face. He probably had Rami do it.

“Disorderly conduct, that’s debatable. It was more an act of mercy, peeing on dying flowers in need of some fluids after the drought.”

“In the middle of Lincoln Park?” Gabe interjects. So rude.

“The police agreed with me, that’s why I didn’t pay any fine.” Also I agreed to go out on a date with the insistent copper.

“You-you lied to them, too! You’ll do anything to get out of trouble. You’re a fucking snake.” He advances toward me with his hands balled up, but I don’t back away. I prepare myself, so bloody ready to punch this joker in the mouth. But Gabe suddenly appears between us.

“Call security,” he instructs Medusa, who is at the door, staring at the whole scene like a busybody.

“You’ve lost your goddamn mind!” Bart yells at him, apparently forgetting about me. Bugger! I really wanted to land one on the tosser.

“Oh, keep your hair on!” I huff his way.

Two guys from security arrive. They look like the jock versions of Mario and Luigi, with matching mustaches and a height difference.

“This is not the end! I won’t sign any damn document to cover his ass, like you forced my brother.” Skid Mark looks at me. *What is he talking about?* “You’ll hear from me again.”

“I hope not, for your sake,” Gabe tells him, but the real meaning is lost on Bart.

The security brothers take a slightly fighting Bart out, and the door closes behind him.

“I helped his brother adjust his face. He should thank me,” I scoff.

“How you elevate your fuming temper to benevolence is masterful.” Gabe hasn’t moved away, and suddenly, the spacious office feels too small for the two of us.

“I just dialed down my temper to an impressive five on a scale of ten,” I counter.

“Everything with you is a confrontation. You can’t follow the simplest code of conduct in a workplace, Lori.” Hearing my name on his lips gives me a small tingling sensation, but his words annoy me.

“Conduct-shmonduct. He’s just like his brother, and all his bones are still intact. I call this a huge show of self-restraint on my part.”

“Did he touch you?” The protective way he utters the question makes the hair stand on my neck. There’s definitely something going on with him. Is it the same thing I’m experiencing?

“No. But he harassed the new intern. I found her crying in the parking garage. I told her to go to HR, but she was afraid to lose her job. So, I took matters into my own hands.” I cross my arms and push my hip out, assuming a challenging pose.

“You should have come to me.”

“The mega busy boss? Your PA told me your next free slot is in two months!” I snark at him.

“She did what?” His jaw ticks slightly. Didn’t Medusa tell him about my calls? *The daft cow.*

“How about your phone? It goes straight to voicemail!”

“It fell in one of Rague’s acid barrels. I bought a new one two days ago,” he explains.

Okay, Ollie didn’t tell me that.

“Why did you send Ollie those texts? Why not me?”

“I wasn’t sure you wanted to be contacted by me.” He pauses while his eyes study mine. “You never hid your dislike toward me. What we did while you were under the influence of the drug, I thought you needed time to process it.”

I’m paralyzed by the most suffocating brain fart I’ve ever had. Have to physically shake my head to come back to the present moment. This is a total new side of Gabe I’m discovering. The caring, sympathetic man. Where is the dismissive jerk I learned to loathe?

“Why did you fire him? And not me? Is it because of Rague and Ollie and the fact that I know about the evil-dispatching family business? I’ll never tell anybody.”

I never noticed how his silvery eyes can turn so dark. “I’m the only one who can chastise you.” The rumble of his words washes over me, the crystalline sincerity in his voice at odds with the chaos starting to swirl inside me.

So many possibilities, so many unanswered questions. And for once, it is my business—not that that’s ever stopped me.

“Is that why you fired his brother? And what’s with the document that covered my arse?” I’m studying his face, but I don’t see any change in his expression. What happened to the bloke who told me about how his dick’s imprint was inside of me?

“I did it because he put his hands on you.” He pauses, looking tense again. “On more employees, as I discovered.”

I have no doubt the older Skid Mark groped more workers. People like him don’t stop, because they don’t want to. They don’t care about hurting others. Gabe surely didn’t like one of his associates playing nonconsensual tag right under his nose, putting his firm in jeopardy.

“The document he signed keeps him from filing a lawsuit against you *and* the firm. I need to work now.” The last statement is filled with finality. And the disregarding jerk is back.

Just when I think I've found some kind of humanity in him, a mutual understanding, he has the ability to turn everything to shite. And I shite you not, I want to strangle him. "You're an arse."

"And your boss," he uselessly reminds me in his haughtiest voice yet.

"No, you're my boss's boss's boss." I push on my tiptoes, getting dangerously close to him. "And we need to talk."

"About?" He lowers his head, leaving an inch or two between us. Damn, his cologne mixed with his scent is so bloody amazing.

"Let's see. The time I went to my dentist and he ended up losing a tooth. The drug they gave us, of course! Do you have any symptoms...left?"

Those pearly eyes zero in on me in under a second. "Like?"

"Mm, strong concupiscent dreams." I clear my throat.

His nostrils flare, and this close, I can clearly see how hard he's trying to control himself. Does it mean he has the same issue?

"Did you talk to Sari about it?" His eyes fall on my lips and linger there.

"H-he said that it's normal." My tongue, all of a sudden, feels heavy inside my mouth. "But I want to know if...you also—"

I'm interrupted by Medusa entering the room.

"Always knock." Gabe lifts his eyes from mine to address his PA with a cold stare. Then he rounds the desk and goes to sit in his chair.

While he does that, Medusa glares my way before clearing her expression and letting Gabe know that she couldn't find any available date for him for the Kravinsky charity dinner tomorrow. Another event to raise money for a good cause. The brothers are quite the philanthropists.

Sari asked me to go with Uri since he won't be able to attend, and in a moment of weakness, I accepted. Free booze, and the perfect occasion to wear my latest thrift store find. Spending it with Uri is the only downside of the evening. Gabe is the second.

“Did you try to increase the payment?” Gabe asks, without taking his eyes off some files on his desk.

Payment? Is he talking about escorts? I’m very confused right now. Doesn’t he have a diary filled with women ready to jump at the possibility of going out with him? Rich, handsome, successful, young. Is he too picky?

“Nobody available on such short notice,” she hurriedly says, pushing her long locks back surely to put on display her busty chest. “I could... accompany you, if you need.”

Could she be more obvious?

Gabe raises his gaze. He looks at me for a second like he’s pondering something, then at her. “Be ready at nine.”

His words hit me in the gut, worse than a real punch. Because I can’t deflect it, can’t do anything but take the ache. I wonder if I’ve suffered a personality transplant, the sole idea of Gabe going to the ball with Medusa is creating murderous scenarios in my mind. Especially when she smirks at me before going back to her workstation.

“See yourself out. I have work to do.” He doesn’t even spare me a glance. Is he still the same caring person who told me he didn’t contact me to give me more time to accept what happened in that club? Did I misunderstand his words?

On my way out, I can’t stop myself. I bump the expensive-looking white vase on the small table near the door. It tips over and makes a loud crashing sound as it hits the floor and shatters in pieces.

Petty I know, but that’s my middle name.

“Oops.” I turn his way and make a shocked face. Then quickly change it into a smirk. “You’re welcome. Horrible taste.”

The smile that appears on his face isn’t a nice one. It’s predatory, and it seems to hold a wicked promise. I don’t have time to contemplate the meaning of it because Gabe is *smiling*. And sodding hell, he’s stunning.

I stand dumbly for a moment, trying to make sense of the warm spiral of awe twirling in my belly. Until I hear Medusa's voice coming from her desk and the spell is broken. I leave the room without a backward glance and make my way toward the elevator with my head high and my mind messed up.

I admit that I have a temper, and that at times, it makes me act like a vengeful bitch. Gabe, though, likes to point out my flaws before dismissing me. And that's what I was expecting when I broke the vase, not that wicked smile. If I add to that those inferno-hot words he said to me, I can say beyond a doubt that Gabe's demeanor is incredibly puzzling. He didn't confirm he has lingering drug side effects like me, but he's always screwed as tight as a jar of pickles.

I'm so lost in my thoughts that I don't realize Skid Mark is waiting for me when I exit the elevator and walk outside the building. His grip on my forearm is bruising tight, but I huff at him, not wanting to give him the satisfaction of knowing that he can hurt me.

"I already rearranged your brother's face. Do you want the same treatment?" I tell him in a discontented tone. His hand doesn't let go.

"You think you've won? Far from it. I'll make you pay." I can clearly see that he tried to wash away the green slime, the collar of his shirt is damp, his hair all messy. In a way he made it worse.

"If you want to leave walking on your legs, release me."

"You're just a screaming bitch."

Really? After I broke his bro's nose, he thinks I'll yelp like a damsel in distress?

I look around, the large sidewalk is busy with people walking at a fast pace, uncaring of their surroundings. I glance inside the building, there's nobody at the entrance desk.

The grip turns painful, making me reach the limit of daily *dickishness* I'm willing to tolerate. *I'm sick of this shite!*

I grab the thumb digging into my skin and wrench it upward, making him instantly release my arm. My knee lifts and hits him right in the family—surely junk—jewels. His back hits the wall, and his grunt of pain turns into a gasp as I compress his upper airway by pushing my forearm against his throat. He's taller than me, but unfit and without any fighting skill, so overpowering him is fairly easy.

"Where the fuck is security? They should have walked you to your car," I suddenly hear Gabe from behind me.

"Oh, someone finally noticed me being manhandled," I mumble sarcastically. I don't know why Gabe is here right now and don't care.

He growls low and deep, but I ignore his presence behind me, so close I can smell his enticing scent, and looking straight into Skid Marks's furious eyes, I hiss, "Touch me again, and I swear to fucking Satan and all his hellhounds that you'll lose your pathetic-sized dick. *Comprende?*"

I wait for him to nod before letting him go with a shove. I slowly straighten my t-shirt, muttering a curse at the green stains on the front while trying to regain some composure. It doesn't work.

"Don't move, Bart," Gabe orders.

Without looking his way, I start walking. I don't turn around even when I hear him calling my name. I stomp my way toward a lingerie shop where I'll meet Sari, fuming like my gran's red kettle.

I've had enough pricks for the day. Fuck him. Fuck all of them.

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six

LORI



For the umpteenth time, my eyes move toward the entrance as I take another sip of wine. The possibility of being dosed again, and at a charity ball, is none, so I'm enjoying the fermented grape juice thoroughly. Still, I cannot stop my mind from reliving, for a moment, that night.

"You're the worst plus-one I've ever brought with me," Uri breaths out.
"Having one of your tantrums?"

I sniff, sending a glare his way. "I'm not throwing a wobbly. I'm not a child!"

"No, more like a murderous gremlin."

This is penance.

"Are you planning my demise?" Doesn't sound like he's joking. I turn a sardonic gaze his way. He looks good in a slick black suit and black shirt. His dreads are styled in a half ponytail, and he swapped his ear and eyebrow studs with diamond ones; around his lower lip, he left its usual black hoop, emphasizing the natural peachiness of his mouth.

"I'm off work, so I can't invest in anybody's horrific assassination, Supermodel. But being mowed down in a hail of machine gun bullets would fit you." Since he loves guns.

He nods in agreement while studying the high-society people milling about in the large ballroom in one of the most luxurious hotels in Chicago.

These Kravinsky people know how to organize a charity dinner.

Uri is an event slut. He loves to be the center of attention while at the same time browsing for a donor—his words. I have to say it is kind of fun to study ritzy people. The level of pretense is incredible. I've never heard so many fake laughs or seen this degree of lavishness.

The elaborate chandeliers illuminate the shiny silverware and expensive china on the round tables, but the elegant, fancy decorations don't take anything away from the ladies strutting around like ostriches in priceless gowns.

I look down at my classic black dress with satisfaction. It has a hollowed-out back and reaches my thighs, showing my spectacular legs while wrapping my butt just right. The sexy, wine glass heels on my feet give me an extra inch—more or less—my curls are pulled back and tied in a bun, and the black eyeliner and purple eyeshadow are the final perfect touches.

“What time is it?” I ask Uri, glancing at the entrance doors one more time.

“Nine forty-five.”

A waitress in a white suit and cute bow tie stops in front of us with a tray filled with wine and whiskey glasses. I down the rest of mine and take a new one, thanking her. I need to get my hands on some of those hors d’oeuvres other waiters are offering around if I don’t want to end up ratarsed.

The alcohol is already working on my mind, letting it loosely think about a certain boss who hasn’t arrived to the party yet. Gabriel Reed is never late...unless Medusa offered him a pleasurable alternative.

My black nails attempt to claw the glass I’m holding, and I see red clouding the edge of my vision. Ahhhh! No! Who cares. I loathe him, right? And yet, it aches when I don’t see him.

“Fuck. Me.” The curse leaves my lips as I finally spot the man who has become the main character of my thoughts enter with Medusa wearing a

slutty silver dress. They are talking cozily about something I'm too far to be able to hear, and I mentally will their conversation to end. But my mental power fails grandiosely.

"Not a chance," Uri tells me in an indifferent tone. His hazel eyes are scanning an old man with a woman half his age draped over his arm.

"No, you prick! Your brother is here," I let him know. I don't look away, I can't, until I'm in danger of being caught, then I give the perfect, swanky couple my back and finish my glass. A waiter passes by with what he calls caviar croutons, and I gulp three of them down, thinking about the Cup Noodles and Cheetos waiting for me inside my soon-to-be former kitchen cupboard.

Fish eggs are not too shabby.

Uri glances at me with a slightly puzzled look but hands me another glass. *Thank his careless sociopathic attitude.*

"So, what's up with you and Sari?" I ask him, attempting like hell to forget about my irritation and my twitching cock.

"Nothing," he replies with a flat tone.

"So, him not coming with you tonight and going on a date with that professor again is nothing?"

If the small orchestra on the stage and the chattering around us turned mute, I'd hear Uri's teeth crack.

"He didn't go out on a date, just had a coffee with a colleague." His gaze is not lazily perusing anymore, but filled with homicidal intent. It's like I called "come out come out, sociopathic killer, wherever you are" when I mentioned Sari with another bloke.

Unaffected by his glare, I grab the lapel of his jacket and go on my tiptoes to ask him in a low voice, "He was never your brother, was he?"

His body turns into steel, his eyes flicker between mine while his arm wraps around my waist to keep me steady in this precarious position. His silence

is a confirmation of what I already suspected. And it's all I need to know... for now. I smooth his jacket front down and smile up at him. "I see."

"What's going on?" Gabe's voice infiltrates between us and I turn my head to look at him. His smoky eyes meet mine, and for a moment, I get lost in them.

"What does it look like? You interrupted us from sucking face," Uri clips. His voice cuts the silence and then disappears in the surrounding chatter as if he'd never spoken.

Bloody hell!

Medusa's pink nails are around Gabe's arm, her thumb caressing the black sleeve. She gives me a quick once-over and then completely dismisses me to smile at Uri with her perfectly straight teeth—which I'd like to knock out.

"Lori," Gabe rumbles. The dark velvety sound of his voice slithers so-so-slowly down my body.

"He decided to move on to the best brother, obviously," Uri keeps going. He tightens his arm around me, and I feel that usual urge to push the unwanted touch away.

"You mean Sari?" I taunt him back. "Yeah, I could definitely see that happening—"

"Ehm, I'm sorry to interrupt. I'm Lilian." Medusa outstretches her hand toward Uri.

"My temp PA," Gabe clarifies, and I have to suck my lips into my mouth to stop the chuckle as I see her smile falter for a second. His eyes are intent on my hands, still pressed to Uri's chest. I feel the sudden urge to pull back, and he lets me go to shake Medusa's hand.

"A pleasure," she utters in a suck-up voice.

"I know." I can't stifle my snort at Uri's reply. After a quick glance at her face, he moves his gaze to Gabe and leaves it there as he addresses me, "Gremlin, I was invited to a dinner at the Von Klare's—"

“Gretchen Von Klare’s?” Medusa cuts him off, her voice is full of eagerness. She’s even leaning slightly toward us.

“Who?” I ask, turning my attention to Uri again.

“Some upscale family, Mayflower pilgrims, old money,” he utters in a bored tone. “Anyway, do you want to come?” Uri owns a multitude of restaurants all over Illinois. He built his empire from scratch and doesn’t have much respect for or interest in rich heirs.

I raise a questioning brow at him. A few minutes ago, he told me he regretted bringing me here, and now he wants a repeat? These foster brothers really like their mind games.

“Sure,” I answer, because I can’t turn down the opportunity to wear one of my party dresses.

A low, angry growl rises in the air, making my toes curl inside my shoes because I remember that sound. I keep hearing it in my hot dreams. I meet Gabe’s searing gaze as my brows reach my hairline in astonishment.

“Mr. Reed, Judge Dermot is waving at you,” Medusa says, pushing her neck-high breasts against Gabe’s arm. He looks down at her, specifically her gazongas, and nods.

“Let’s dance,” Uri suddenly announces. He grabs my hand without giving me any choice and drags me toward the few people slowly swaying in front of the small orchestra.

His hands fall on my waist as he pulls me against him, and my arms wrap loosely around his neck. That feeling of wanting to wiggle away is there but I force myself to ignore it.

“Didn’t take you for the dancing type,” I tell him with a sniff.

“I’m more of the enjoy-screwing-with-my-otherwise-robotic-brother type.”

“By dancing with me?” I ask with skepticism.

“Exactly.”

My eyes search for Gabe, who's not looking at us at all. He's instead talking to some rich-looking people with Medusa still clinging to him. She passes him an hors d'oeuvre, and he pops it into his mouth absently.

"Ugh. The only thing that would screw with Gabe is if he choked on one of those delicious croutons." That's a nice image. I'm sure Medusa is an expert in giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation with all the arse kissing she executes daily.

Maybe I should just let another guy fuck me and get this over with. Unfortunately, the way Uri is batting his eyelashes, smiling sultrily, and leaning close is doing fuck all for me.

"Why doesn't he have a stupid nickname?"

"Eh?" I focus on Uri's hazel eyes again.

"Rague is KKJ, Michael is Bones, Sari is Angel, Bully Boy is for Raph, Reacher for Rami, and I'm Supermodel." He gives me a knowing look, the wanker. "Why doesn't Gabe have another name?"

Bugger. "He doesn't deserve one?" It's more a question than a statement because the truth is that he's always been Gabe to me. Controlled, haughty, amazingly skilled in the sack Gabe.

"I see," he repeats the words I told him a few minutes ago, plastering a knowing smug smile on his face. "Let's speed things up a bit, shall we?"

"Wha—?" Then his lips are on mine. Well, not completely on mine, more on the corner of my mouth. The people surrounding us, though, must think he's laying one on me—a long one.

A crushing sound followed by a scream spears the air, breaking Uri's silly act and making me look to my right. My gaze falls halfway across the room on Gabe. His eyes, laser-focused on me, feel like a physical touch.

A rough, bruising touch.

My heart pounds like rain on the ground, and I stop for a moment, frozen. My mouth opens as I notice his bleeding hand and the broken glass at his feet. Did he crush the glass he was holding with his fingers?

I move without thinking, crossing the room until I'm almost in front of him. But his firm "No" halts my steps. He swiftly curls his arm around my torso and lifts me in the air, spinning me around and slowly placing my feet back on the ground.

I'm still feeling the echo of his warm and hard chest against mine when he hisses on my lips, "Careful." He brings my attention to the broken glass on the floor.

His attentiveness shocks me once again. I let go of his shoulders to grab his bleeding hand between mine and inspect the damage meticulously. The cuts are shallow, but there're tiny, sharp pieces embedded in the skin.

I turn to a waitress. "Do you have a first aid kit? I also need a bowl of water, a pair of tweezers and a clean towel."

She nods and jogs away, hopefully to get them.

Then I let go. "What the bloody fuck happened?" I barely contain my irritation.

"It's nothing." He tries to pull the hand away, vexing me even more, and I automatically tighten my grip on his wrist.

"Are you a doctor? No!" Worry and annoyance roll off me in waves. "I need to pull the glass out, or you'll risk an infection."

Gabe lifts his questioning brow at me while giving me a stern stare. Why the fuck is he cross with me? He's the one bleeding all over the shiny marble floors. Hence my irritation toward him.

I yank him around the room until I force him to sit down at one of the round tables. The waitress comes back with an aid box and the rest of the things I asked for, followed by the hotel manager. He apologizes profusely about the *faulty* glass—what the actual fuck?—and talks about calling an ambulance...the drama queen. I assure him I can take care of the *accident* since I've patched up Ollie and Sully on more occasions than I remember and stare down challengingly at Gabe, waiting for him to agree. He gives the sweaty manager a short nod and holds out his hand.

That's more like it.

Where the hell is Medusa?

I sit on the chair near him as the curious people gathered around us start to lose interest and move away. I clean the blood from his hand with water from the bowl, using the towel to dry it gently. Then after checking it over again, I start picking out the small shards from his palm. I halt and stare up at him with every piece I pull out, trying to discern if he's feeling pain. I don't see any change in his eyes, so I keep going until I take all of them out, but something feels strange. And it only intensifies the more I take care of him.

"Does it hurt?" I ask him, scanning his face.

He shakes his head slowly, those piercing, smoky eyes steady on my face. My dick certainly likes the attention, while I feel like my mouth is too dry to speak. I silently clean his wound once again and bandage it. Clearing my throat, I'm able to whisper, "Done." The moment I drop his hand, he grabs my wrist and pulls me toward him.

"Why?" he asks, his darkened eyes darting between mine.

Why did I help him? Why am I suddenly drawn to him? Why can't I stop thinking about his dick? About him?

"No 'thank you'?" My words make his grip tighten around my wrist. "I'm just trying to pay you back for what you've done for me." Which is not a lie, but not the entire truth either. Because when I saw him bleeding, I just followed an inexplicable need to be sure he was alright.

"That's not—" Gabe is interrupted by a fretting Medusa.

"What happened?" She turns accusingly to me. "What did you do?"

I close my eyes and mentally enumerate the names of the Seven Dwarves, or try to, I always forget one. It's a little trick that distracts me enough to calm me down. Barely works this time. Then I stand up, more than ready to go unless these floors want to be covered in more blood—Medusa's blood—but Gabe's firm grasp on my wrist keeps me there.

"Don't do that again," he rumbles deeply. *Don't help him? Why? Unless it's with me, Little Wasp.*"

His eyes fall on my lips. Is he talking about Uri's kiss? He lets my hand go. I'm confused and horny at hearing that damn nickname coming out of his mouth. His touch lingers like a brand as the organizer of the event reaches us and asks Gabe about the accident.

Feeling like I need a time-out from everything, I leave them talking and go toward the bathrooms.

I push the first door open. The room is wide, spotless with one big stall and many kinds of amenities covering the long black counter near the sinks.

I've just the time to place my cute, rented Vuitton on the counter when I hear the door open—which I forgot to lock—and a very annoying voice reaches me from behind.

“You’re pathetic.” Medusa’s reflection appears in the mirror.

Fuck me sideways, I urgently need to sit down with Lady Karma for a nice cuppa and ask her what the bloody sodding fuck I’ve done to deserve this.

“Leave,” I breath out, grabbing my bag once again to look for my eyeliner. Need to keep my idle hands from strangling the trollop.

She moves to the mirror, and while slowly checking her makeup and pushing her hair back, she lets out a short, movie-villain laugh. “Can’t you see? Your place is not here; it’s with people of your own—” she pauses for malefic effect, “status.”

What is this, an episode of Downton Abbey? I was wrong, *this* is penance. I spin and forcefully lean my hip against the sink, clicking my pumps on the shiny floor. She’s taller than me, but I still give her my fiercest look.

“I said LEAVE before I change my mind and beat last year’s lipstick color from your mouth in a bitch slap fight which you won’t win, because I’m the queen of bitches, slag.”

Her face turns into a twisted, angry mask. “All the high-class people here know very well what you are. They can hear you talking. Why do you think they are staring at you and whispering? You are scum.”

Her odious words don't work on me. *Jealous bitches be crazy.* I'm fabulous, that's the only reason people look at me. Using those British words and sayings keep the memory of my gran alive with me. They're part of who I am.

Nevertheless, Medusa needs to be imparted some Lori-wisdom anyway, because nobody talks me down and leaves unpunished.

I snort derisively, getting ready to pounce on the bitch, but Gabe's voice suddenly booms inside the bathroom, putting a stop to my lesson before it even happened. "You...out!"

His icy tone makes my balls want to take cover inside my body while my ass clenches, eager to be filled.

Medusa and I turn toward the door, both of us keeping our positions. Gabe is staring at me with such a potent gaze I couldn't move even if I tried.

"Your boss said to remove your bony ass out of here. Do it already!" Uri appears behind Gabe, and I know he's talking to her since my butt is far from skinny. Plus, if he ever spoke to me like that, it would mean war. "Before Gremlin rearranges your face."

I reply to his smirk with a smile. That was surely a compliment by Uri's standards, he's the torturer among the brothers after all.

Medusa sputters a few incomprehensible words, to which Gabe replies with a growly, "Out! You too, Uri."

"Like I want to see a robot and a gremlin banging," he grumbles, and makes an impatient let's-go arm gesture Medusa's way. She sends a puppy look at Gabe, but he doesn't take his probing eyes off me. The door closes behind them, and I hear the click of the lock as Gabe turns the bolt.

Banging? That's absolutely the last thing on Gabe's mind, isn't it?

"Has she given you problems before?" he asks, stalking my way. Every step he takes exudes command and resolution.

"She's been rude. Don't know what her problem is." I huff, crossing my arms.

“How many times has she treated you like that?”

“This level of nasty is new,” is all I give him. I can surely take care of myself.

“Does anyone else treat you like that at the firm?”

Why all these questions? “Not to that extent.” I smooth my dress, and his eyes drop down for a second.

“If it happens again with someone else, you need to report it,” he insists.

“To HR, I know.” But I’ll never do that. Doesn’t he know by now that I like to add my personal touch to my tit-for-tat?

“No, to me.” He stops in front of me. His jaw is ticking, showing his annoyance.

“Yeah, but the right channel is—”

“Me.” Gabe’s voice has turned deep, that low register that sends delicious sparks down my spine. He didn’t raise his voice, but his deadly serious tone cut through me like an arrow through water.

Instead of giving him one of my sharp retorts, I sigh and edge closer, tilting my head even further back while pinning him with my gaze. Need suddenly slams into me, and I feel slightly lightheaded.

“Why are you here?” he asks as his eyes move to my curls, studying my high bun. His words don’t compute at first, my brain is out of oxygen. But my dick is the organ in need of CPR.

I ignore his question. “How’s your hand? Did she fawn over you and kiss it better?” I scoff. The thought of sharing Gabe makes me rather sick to my stomach, a reaction I certainly don’t care to examine at the moment. Or never. I refuse to let my dumbass thoughts have the better of me. I mean, sharing? We had sex one night...multiple times.

Has he leaned closer? Or has my depth perception gone bonkers?

“It’s quite a leap from your usual drink spitting to breaking the glass,” I taunt him, trying to lighten my previous words. In the past, he’s sprayed

Rami a couple of times with whatever he was drinking.

“Lori.” My name in that gravelly voice makes heat pool in my belly, and a flash of him using that same tone while coming deep inside me pushes some pre-cum right out of my slit.

I can’t help the lick of arousal that spreads through me. Swallowing, I try hard to contain it. I fail and straighten up instead, hoping the too-perceptive lawyer doesn’t take one look at me and know exactly where my brain has gone. This is Gabe, for fuck’s sake! Nothing will ever happen—again.

I frown at him and turn toward the sink, splashing water on my wrists, hoping it will stop my furious pulse.

“Answer me.” The demand in his voice is hot and vexing at the same time.

“Doing a favor for Sari,” I reply, still keeping my back to him as I dry my hands.

“Is that all?” Does he sound different? There’s something in his husky voice—I remember it from my dreams—I can’t quite put my finger on it. Is it his horny voice perhaps? Doesn’t matter.

I’m able to put a smirk on my face and turn around. “No. The expensive food, and the chance to wear this dress were a great incentive.”

His eyes like licks of a flame slide down my body, taking me in with no rush.

“Don’t worry, you can keep ignoring me and internally judging me just as you always do. I’m not going to force my presence on you, like you were forced when I was drugged,” I tell him, gritting my teeth.

He closes the last inches between our bodies, coercing me to push my tushy against the sink.

“I don’t judge you, Little Wasp.” Again, that damn nickname. And his voice is definitely dissimilar to his usual monotone one. Also his eyes, they have turned into dark pools.

He remains still, but it’s like I’m engulfed by a fucking blaze while my tongue is twisted inside my mouth. He’s invading my space, his face a

breath from mine. The bloke doesn't know how to give an inch.

Why don't I feel the urge to push him away?

My shoes are filled with concrete. Every part of my body is tensed to the maximum. Waiting.

"My drink was spiked as well. Most drugs don't have any effect on me, though. Nobody forced me to do anything," he confesses.

Does he mean that he enjoyed helping me?

I swallow hard. Or does it mean that I'm so blinded by good dick that I don't know my fucking mind? Because I want to be fucked by Gabriel Reed...again. "No effect?"

He leans closer—if that's even possible—and his hands fall on the counter behind me. He stops less than an inch from my lips. Lingering there like in the recurring sex dream I've been having at night. His breath feels hot on my skin as he lets out a long puff of air. I can't stop the shiver running down my body.

Granted, he's taller and stronger than me. He has more than a couple of inches and a good thirty pounds on me, all lean muscle. At any point during his advance, though, I still could have tried to stop him and push him away. But I didn't. I'm not. Because I want this nearness. I hope for more of it. My body is coming alive like Frankenstein's monster.

"No," he growls. His hot mouth suddenly catches my lower lip between his teeth. The shock of it runs all the way up to my brows.

"Mm." The moan leaves my lips when he bites down, making me gasp. My hands tighten around the edge of the sink behind me. He sucks hard and then lets go with a pop, leaving my lower lip throbbing.

I don't even know how my frozen brain is creating words anymore. I get even more distracted when his tongue comes out to slick his lower lip. I mirror him, tasting his bitterness and sweetness for the first time.

He turns the intensity up in his hypnotic, bottomless eyes as he stares at my tongue. Then a soft groan comes out of him, and I feel the vibration against

my chest and down into my balls.

His breath brushes over my lips again, and I try to suck some of it in. This close, I can count every strand of wheat blond hair and discover each little freckle on his face. His tongue peeks out to lick the corner of my mouth where my beauty mole is. My tense muscles turn to jelly while my breaths are too fast to actually get any oxygen inside my lungs.

The air between us thickens. The world surrounding us has disappeared. My head swims, all of my wits forever gone, lost. I reach up and try to grip his arm, to take some control back. But he shakes his head.

“Take my cock out, Little Wasp,” he commands. His gaze darkens as that sentence leaves his lips. The heat pooling in my abdomen is at risk of turning me into a melting mess.

Still, I don’t respond well to orders. “You have fingers, don’t you?” Lame, but again, frozen brain, melting body...can’t get much out of them.

His long-fingered, muscular hand—which is my kryptonite since I have a thing for strong, well-shaped hands—shoots up, closing around my neck. His broad palm and masculine digits wrap all the way from side to side. My fingers instinctually grasp his wrist, even though his grip is not tight. Not loose either. It’s fucking perfection. The clench of arousal hits me like a blow.

His other hand reaches my hair, and with one pull to the tie, my curly locks descend around my face like a waterfall. His fingers lace among the strands, and he grabs a handful, letting out a pucker-contracting growl.

“I fucking dig how feisty you are. It turns me the fuck on,” he snarls, as he nuzzles the side of my face with his nose, pulling on my hair to tilt my head to the side.

Christ, did I die and end up in all-my-book-boyfriends-come-true heaven?

“But I’ve been waiting enough already. Take. My. Cock. Out.” With every word, he tightens his grip around my hair, sending a feeling of pleasure-pain down my body.

But I have no idea what he's talking about. Waiting? I'm too shocked by this side of him. I recall him being this *direct* when we were inside Crimson, but not while he was fucking me. He barely spoke.

The ensuing silence feels like a two-ton weight on me, it's filled with a consuming desire I can't contain.

As if it has a will of its own, my hand leaves the counter and moves to Gabe's pants, deftly unzipping them and pushing down the black boxer briefs.

My memories weren't lying. His cock is long and bloody glorious. I can do nothing but stare for a long moment. I wish I could do it forever, in fact, I'd even pay for the privilege.

His dick twitches under my observation, and a drop of pre-cum forms on the tip, making me bite my already swollen lip with the urge to kneel down and suck it off.

"Spit." He lets go of my hair and moves his hand near my mouth, his fingers tightening slightly around my throat. He expects me to defy him. Not a fucking chance. But I can still choose the how.

Holding his gaze with challenge in my eyes, I open my mouth and let saliva drip down, directly on his cockhead, covering it beautifully. He groans, and lowering his fingers, he wraps them around his shaft, giving it a slow top-to-base pump.

"More."

I oblige him.

He clenches his teeth and flattens his mouth. His lower lip is larger than the upper, and the urge to lick it is wild.

I can see his muscular arm flexing in the suit jacket as he slowly beats himself off. Slurps fill the room, long and loud. I wish they were coming from my mouth on his cock, but the thought of my saliva engulfing it has to be enough.

People would pay top dollar to watch him working himself like this, even more if he kneeled on the floor, muscular legs spread open to give him more room to work. This is live porn paradise.

His thumb rubs my skin, reaching my chin to tilt my head up. His pupils are so large that the slate-gray has almost vanished. They're locked on me as if I am something to be devoured. My mouth turns slack, and I let out a low, incoherent sound. I've never been this horny before—without the help of a drug.

His cock twitches, spilling more delicious pre-cum, while his heavy balls continue bouncing with every jerk of his hand.

“Tell me what you dreamed about.” His low grunt snaps my eyes back to his face. “Is it my cock inside you?”

A searing fire shoots down my spine and lodges in my balls.

Memories of him fucking me, his cock pounding me into jelly, his heavy body pinning me down, forcing me to take more, showing me how in charge he was.

A shuddering moan rises up in my throat, and I'm unable to choke it back.

“Tell me.” His hand stops, and I whimper in protest.

I buck, trying to rub my aching cock on him, but his hand around my neck and his shoulders like unmovable rocks keep me still. My lower abdomen feels heavy and tight, and a swirling sensation is burning me from the inside.

I stare up at him when his grip on my throat tightens considerably. His expression has me pressing back against the sink. Those metallic eyes fixed on me like a hawk looks at prey.

A pathetic little whine comes out from my dry throat, but it doesn't move him. He curls his lips and growls, “You don't want to cross me.”

“Oh, but I do,” I breath out. Then a whiff of his smell enters my nose, so uniquely Gabe, so irritating, comforting, and arousing. I don't want this to stop. All I can do is answer him.

My voice sounds soft even to my ears. *What is he doing to me?* “In my dreams I don’t care about anything but my empty hole. And everything comes to a halt when your thick and hot and smooth cockhead presses between the cheeks of my arse. You grasp them—your hands fitting perfectly over each—and pry them apart. Your thumbs stretch my wet entrance open as you thrust forward, sliding inside me all at once. So long, and deeper than anybody has ever been. I feel the perfect shape of you. The large tip and your long shaft.”

He snarls again, beating himself off with frantic pumps. “Fuuuuuck. More!” The command makes every cell in my body tremble with lust. My dick hurts with the need to release.

“You grunt deeply as you stiffen even more and start to come in me. A warm, hot fluid filling me for the first time.”

“Fuck yeah, only me,” he hisses possessively.

“Each one of your words hits me harder than the last. My cock turns stiff again so quickly, pulling all the blood away from my brain.” I whimper, recalling the hard fuck he gave me and the sensation of being stuffed to the brink while he kept fucking me. Because what I’ve described for him are the memories of us together in Rague’s car. “Those filthy words. Did I imagine them?”

“You want filthy?” His voice dips into a rasp. A low noise rumbles in his throat, and the swooping sensation in the pit of my stomach intensifies. “That tight little pucker can milk my dick fucking dry, sucking the cum out of my balls so fast, I see stars. You can fight me all you want, but when I get that hot-as-fuck bod under me as I give your ass the spanking it deserves, you’ll beg again to be fucked. Filled. Used and marked. Christ!” He pauses to let out the sexiest grunt I’ve ever heard as he clamps a firm hand around the base of his angry-looking dick in an effort to calm himself.

My balls hurt with an urge to release the built-up pressure. My arse needs to be stuffed by him. I need him to pump his cum in me. To feel it dripping down my thighs as he keeps growling my name. I let out a wavering cry as, suddenly, ecstasy explodes out of my dick, shooting jizz inside my black jockstrap, making a mess.

Fuck, I'm coming untouched.

Lightheaded and fuzzy, still riding the O-train, I can hear him growl, "Just like that, give it to me, Little Wasp. Now lift your dress. The wait is over."

I've never been one to think very long when instinct leads me to act, even less when I'm buzzing with echoes of pleasure. And I just can't say no to those gray eyes at this moment. So, I do what he says and raise my tight dress up until it reaches my belly. Putting on display the wet spot on the front of my jockstrap.

His wanking turns furious when his eyes laser in on the evidence of my pleasure. Then he forces my head to the side and pain erupts at the base of my neck as he sinks his teeth in me, letting out a low, guttural groan that pushes more cum out of my slit.

I feel the warmth of his jizz hitting my belly and thighs as his body keeps jerking against me. It keeps splashing over my skin, covering me in it. It feels like he's marking my skin once again. The thought starts a cloud of excitement inside me, which rather worries me.

His hand shifts on my neck, the grip loosens a little as his teeth release my aching skin, and he pulls his head back. His lips are a panting breath from mine, eyes the color of blurry rain clouds. And I give in to the screaming voice in the back of my head, grab his nape, and crush our mouths together.

He opens right away, starting a battle for control, each of us trying to make the other submit as we twist our tongues, bite and suck with heated passion. His thumb on my chin forces my face further upward; his fingers feel hot around my neck as his other hand takes a handful of my arse in its palm and squeezes.

The kiss is bloody explosive and so damn unreal. I'm kissing Gabriel Reed, and it's the most exciting snogging I've ever had. His short hair feels so soft under my fingers, I can't stop running them through the locks.

He groans, while my heart races as I fall even deeper into the abyss of my desire for him. I bite his tongue, and he suddenly pulls back, his eyes focused on my mouth.

“You really are a Little Wasp,” he whispers. I should hate the stupid nickname, but all I feel is confusion.

“Why wasp?”

“Because you buzz around with such energy and purpose.” He touches my hair. “Ready to prick anybody who rubs you the wrong way.”

Well, fuck!

His thumb rubs my lips left and right a couple of times, before he takes a step back, and releases me so suddenly that I feel like a ship with no anchor. He tucks himself back in without a word or a glance my way.

I’m caught between indignation, astonishment, confusion, and the lingering remains of pleasure that have my cock still half hard.

The air in the bathroom has turned cold. You would think the reason is because I’m half naked, but no, the icy vibes are coming from Gabe. He moves to the sink to wash his hands and then passes me some paper towels. He’s wearing again his usual mask, the one that doesn’t reveal anything.

Vexed by his sudden change of mood, I yank the towels unceremoniously from his fingers and start cleaning myself. I feel his eyes on me the entire time, until I pull my dress down. The bruise on my neck stings, but I love the sight of it. And hate that I love it.

When I look at him, his hair is perfectly styled again, and his suit without a wrinkle. Like what we just shared never happened.

The silence draws out as it’s my turn to check myself in the mirror.

“What?” I finally snap, not caring about the snark in my voice, because he keeps staring at me without saying anything.

“Don’t tie your hair again,” he only states in his lawyer-y, haughty voice, the same one I’ve heard him using at the office. “And forget the dinner at the Von Klare’s with Uri.”

My incredulous gaze meets his. And just as my thoughts find their way to my brain again, he turns and leaves the bathroom. The saying “I hate to see

you go but love to watch you walk away” doesn’t apply here—not in the slightest.

His arrogance is staggering! The insufferable dick!

He ordered me around while jerking off and coming all over me before turning into his usual distant, controlled self and walking away like I was a quick shag. It’s humiliating. Infuriating. And I’ve never been this turned on in my life.

What the bloody fuck just happened?



GABRIEL/BEZALIEL

“Mr. Reed, we don’t have a personal assistant available at the moment.” Evelyn’s voice over the phone sounds apologetic.

“I understand,” I say.

No, you fucking don’t, Bez huffs.

“I’ll try to contact more agencies.”

“Please do.” I hang up, turning my desk chair around to look outside my office window. The sunset has painted the high buildings with orange and red brushes. The colorful sight is quite stunning even after many years. But I’m not completely engaged in the beauty of it.

Firing another temp PA wasn’t a smart move. The last one was passable in the office, but clearly after another position, a more intimate one. Not to mention the way she treated Lori, the bathroom incident at the charity dinner had certainly been an eye opener.

An image of Lori moving around in that tight black dress, which emphasized the generous curve of his round rear, the sharp edges of his narrow hips, and the soft arc of his neck pops in my brain. The feel of his

warm body as Bez jerked off against him comes next, along with the sweet way he tasted and the wild desire filling his eyes.

Such pretty eyes, Bez comments. I prefer his fleshy, meaty ass.

I still can't believe I let Bez take over.

You didn't let me do a fucking thing. You wanted it, Gabe. You want Lori. Wake the fuck up, and let's fucking take him already. Bez huffs.

It's not that easy. We can't just take...

I always take, Bez reminds me. And it's true, he does without thinking about the consequences. It's good I'm a lawyer and know how to navigate the law, otherwise we'd be rotting in a cell.

You can't just take this time, I tell him. Because Lori is not like one of his fucks in a bar.

Why do you always have to be so boringly logic? Bez complains.

Logical, I correct him. Knowing too well how much he hates it.

Fuck you.

What happened last night had been surprising. I hadn't expected Lori to enjoy what Bez did.

And that kiss.

Bez had pulled back for a moment when Lori attacked my lips. The moment his tongue speared my mouth, I just lost it. Kissing has always been an act of foreplay I never particularly liked. But with Lori, it turned into a passionate battle for dominance, a duel of tongues.

I'm not sure who won. But I know I'd very much like to make him submit to me. To bite again that sexy dip on his lower lip.

I shake my head in an attempt to dispel those thoughts even though my cock remains half hard while I continue to work.

Sometime later, my phone chimes.

It's the stupid chat Rami created, Bros&Spouses. And speaking of my idiotic brother...

Rami: I was thinking about reproduction. How would it work for C-3PO?

Your bros are a bunch of idiots, Bez grumbles. *It's a relief you're not actually related.*

You mean biologically related.

Whatever.

Michael: He'd multiply through mitosis

Sari: After eating a giant slice of cake, he'll separate into two Gabes?

Ollie: You mean three Gabes...

Lori: Why three??

Nobody replies to Lori's question.

Rami: I'm an advocate for creating his own Gabe Jr. through robotic engineering.

Rague: Why not laying eggs?

Ollie: Like a chicken?

Raph: More like a giant praying mantis

Michael: Would he eat his partner afterward?

Rami: He definitely would

Uri: The simplest theories are the best

Ollie: Like impregnating a woman

Lori: Or a man

Sari: M-preg, that's interesting

Rague: And laying eggs is not plausible?

Rami: C-3PO, no input? Are you rebooting?

Me: I'm leaving this chat

Raph: Why, Gabe? Are you crying?

Me: I don't cry

Rami: Right, coz you'd rust

Uri: Did you fire your witch of a PA? She screamed like a banshee when security dragged her out the ballroom

Rague: Fired her, or set her on fire?

Lori: I vote for the latter

Rague: Let's light the witch up!

Rami: Cool down, Hulky

Hunter: What happened with Gabe's PA?

Rami: I told you this morning in the shower, Grizzly

Hunter: I didn't hear you

Rami: My noise-canceling bod strikes again!

Uri: Gag

Lori is not engaging in the banter with my brothers as usual. Why?

This morning, I passed by his cubicle and heard him laughing, but it sounded forced. I gazed at him while talking to one of the associates, and when he thought nobody was watching, a frown appeared on his face.

Something is wrong. He didn't even spare me a glance. It's odd. He never misses an opportunity to tease or challenge me. Ignoring me is not like him. I expected anger or some kind of petty revenge.

Also odd that I found myself going out of my way not to let my gaze linger on him. A passing glance of admiration has never been something I'd stress about, but Lori's high brown boots, snug shorts enveloping his high rear like a second skin, and loose yellow sweater falling down his pale shoulder kept catching my attention and somehow distracted me from work. Nothing has ever taken me away from my job but my foster family.

Lori: Any news on the revenge front?

Rami: Still looking for Bailey. Nothing yet

Lori: And Bird Turd? *poop emoji* *angry emoji*

Rami: Phoenix? Nada. But those bastards will make a mistake soon. I can feel it

Lori: I will yank so hard on his balls that all his organs will come out as well!

Fuck, he's sexy, Bez whistles, and it's too damn loud inside my head.

Ollie: Reel that untrained murderous ass in
Sari: I don't think that's a possibility
Sari: The yanking of the organs through the testicles part
Michael: The reeling part as well, in Lori's case
Lori: I need my revenge. It's not fair!
Uri: Fair is the stupidest word humans have invented
Sari: Aren't you human as well?
Uri: I'm 100% sociopath
Raph: Tough luck, everybody knows psychopaths are better

Not wanting to witness another socio-versus-psycho argument, I place my phone face down on the desk. I try to go back to the pile of files on my desk, but my mind is not into it. I feel my uneasiness crawling under my skin.

Go to him, Bez whispers.

Who? I feign ignorance.

Fucking go!

Why?

Because you need to. Sometimes I envy Bez's simple way of thinking. Haven't you figured it out yet? he insists.

I decide to go see Evelyn again instead and see if I can speed up the process of finding a new temp PA. Bez's long exasperated sigh echoes in my head as I cross my office.

I'm opening the door when I hear a loud thud and then a moan of pain, followed by some gasps and a few chuckles.

I search for the source of the commotion, and that's when my eyes fall on the reason for my distraction. Lori has a hand over his face while waving the other at the worried-looking receptionist.

My feet, guided by Bez, take me to him in a few seconds. I send a hard glance at the people milling around, and they quickly go back to work.

“What happened?” I ask the receptionist.

“Lori hit his face on the conference room’s glass door,” she replies, looking with a mix of perplexity and worry at Lori.

“I’m fine!” His voice sounds muffled behind his hand.

“Grab some ice from the kitchen,” I instruct the receptionist. Then I move closer to Lori. I slide my arms around his waist and lift him up.

“What...?” He gasps. “Gabe, but no down!” I ignore his futile protest and carry him inside the conference room and set him on the long table. He’s so much smaller than me, but his inner vitality, his lively spirit could fill the whole United Center.

I cradle his face in my hands, and at the touch, he jerks slightly while the prickling sensation running up and down my arms stops. “Let me take a look.” Hearing my voice, he tenses. Displeasure hits me hard, but I push it away. I tilt his head up as he tries to shake it, but I hold it still. “Move your hand, Lori. There’s a thin line between stubbornness and idiocy.”

He remains still for a second, then slowly lowers his palm down. His forehead and nose are red. There’s no blood, though.

I calmly study his moody brown eyes up close; they are watery and filled with pain. He’s not wearing his usual makeup, and his eyelashes appear auburn in color, but also gold and chestnut.

The receptionist returns with an ice pack before running to her desk to answer the ringing phones. I place it gently on the reddened skin. His thighs covered in fishnet stockings under a pair of white shorts are open, letting me step between them.

My sense of relief is overtaken by anger that I’m barely able to control.

“What were you thinking? You’re lucky the glass didn’t break. You could have hurt yourself badly.”

“I had a lot on my mind!” he retorts with a much higher level of irritation.

“What? What’s wrong?” I ask.

“Nothing,” he stubbornly replies.

“Tell me,” I insist.

“Why?”

Why indeed, Bez mockingly says.

“It could interfere with your work.”

Nice save, Gabe!

“No, it won’t.” Lori is frowning again as if something doesn’t quite add up.

Smart, Little Wasp.

“I call hitting a door with your face a big red flag,” I try to reason with him. I can feel the softness of his curls under my fingers, the smoothness of his skin. He didn’t push my hands away, nor tell me to go away.

“A glass door.”

“A very visible glass door that you’ve used numerous times,” I counter.

“Stop provoking me.” He grabs the ice pack from my hand and yanks it away from his face. “You don’t want to see my resentful side.”

“I’ve seen it plenty. You’re a walking firecracker with sparks going off under your feet with every step you take.” I raise my eyebrow at him, daring him to disagree.

He narrows his brown eyes at me, now full of annoyance. Pushing a finger to my chest, he says, “Let’s get something straight here. My ducks are not in a row. They are...chilling near the pond. I suspect one of them is a pigeon in disguise hoping to score with one of them. But, I solve my own problems. Don’t need a knight in shining armor to come and bloody rescue me! Unless I’m being dosed it seems. So back off!”

I just keep staring at him, tightening my hand on his face and placing the other on his leg. Bez suddenly pushes me down to come out.

Fuck diplomacy!

“You’re keeping something from me. Don’t fucking like it, Little Wasp,” I unleash my anger.

Instead of fighting back, his eyes flicker acutely over my face. I can see the cogs whirring inside his head.

“It’s like you’re a completely different person at times,” he utters, like he’s voicing a thought out loud. Then he seems to shake the idea off. “It’s still none of your business. Stop bothering me!”

And here is that bellicose temper I dig so much.

I give him a wicked smirk and shift my hand until I grab a handful of curls. “You’re so fucking hot when you stand up to me. Fight me. Even threaten me with that Rudolf nose.” He gasps indignantly hearing that. My hand trails upward until I squeeze his thigh. “But you’re wrong, everything about you is my business whether you like it or not.”

The staring contest continues for a while. Until his eyes fall to my hand on his leg. He grabs it and turns it to look at the cuts on my palm from the broken glass. They’re healing easily thanks to his care. Then he sniffs and dropping my hand pushes against my chest. Or tries to.

“People are watching us, Mr. Reed,” he says, glancing at the glass walls of the conference room. Despite my I-don’t-give-a shit-about-people attitude, this is Gabe’s domain. It’s the reason why I live a very comfortable life.

It is, Gabe uselessly says.

You’re the one that hauled him all the way in here! I remind him.

To have some privacy.

In a room made of glass? He’s so fucking blind. How can he not see what is right in front of him? And he’s the one with a PhD.

“Hey.” I focus on Lori again. He’s studying me with a small frown on his face.

I push back and let Gabe take the reins again...for now.

“Keep the ice pack on your nose.” I let Lori go and watch as he jumps down from the table and walks away from me. With every step he takes the uneasiness slowly comes back under my skin. It’s astonishing.

I grit my teeth and grabbing my phone, I dial Rague’s number.

“Gabe,” he answers after three rings. He’s probably working on the library café he opened with Ollie.

“Need to talk to your husband.” They are always together unless Ollie is in class.

“Something wrong?” he asks.

“Yeah.”

I’m starting to figure out what Bez has been alluding to.

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seven

GABRIEL/BEZALIEL



I park my BMW in front of Lori's building and make my way out of the car. The forlorn structure looms in the impoverished area. It's early evening, and the game between shadows and streetlights gives the building an eerie appearance. Its cracked paint, boarded-up windows, and the overall beaten-up look tell a story of neglect and dangerous times.

I see a man standing near the lamppost. He's wearing a ball cap and smoking a cigarette. There's something familiar about him, but just as I decide to get a better look, I hear an appreciative whistle coming from the group of young guys on the building's broken front stairs. They're dealers waiting for their clients, members of a gang judging by the same tattoo of a scorpion on their arms.

"Nice ride," one of them tells me as I make my way toward them, flashing two gold teeth as he smirks at me.

I stop in front of him, leaving three feet between us, and stare him down for a moment. "It is, and if I find even a scratch on it, I'm going to slit your tongue and feed it to..." I look around them. My gaze finds a skinny boy with sad eyes. "Him."

The guy jumps down on the sidewalk and takes out an impressive tactical knife from his jeans, pointing it at me.

“You’re holding it the wrong way,” I tell him, not even a little intimidated by his overplayed act.

“No, I’m not, fancy-pants.” He pushes out his chest and spits on the ground, still holding his knife wrong. I could grab mine from the back of my jacket, but I don’t think I’ll need it against this guy.

“Never draw a blade unless you’re willing to show it blood,” I say my mantra out loud, which only makes him tighten his grip on the knife.

We have no time for this, Bez states. *Knock him out and get the knife. It’s a nice piece for your collection.*

“Are you going to attack me or just stand there like a pathetic fool?”

The numerous jeers behind him make him react. He comes at me, knife first, no technique whatsoever, his movements way too slow. I easily avoid the blade, and after grabbing his wrist, I spin my body one hundred and eighty degrees, sliding under his arm and positioning my back to his front. I pull his arm hard, dislocating his elbow first, then his shoulder as I grab his bicep and give another pull.

I hear the clank of the knife on the ground, the guy’s whimpers, and the gasps from the rest of the gang, but nobody makes a move to help him. I spin again, twisting his arm and tuning out the scream that leaves the guy’s lips. A knee in his guts makes him fall on the cracked cement and a kick to his face puts him to sleep. Blood runs out of his nose, painting the dark sidewalk red.

They never listen! Bez sighs mockingly.

I pull on the lapels of my jacket and adjust the collar of my shirt as I lift my eyes to the rest of the gang standing on the stairs staring at me with different levels of fright. A couple of them must have fled, but the skinny boy is still there, looking at me with awe in his gaze.

“Loo-look, man we don’t want any trouble,” a bold guy states weakly. I ignore him.

“You,” I tell the skinny one as I pick the knife up from the ground and slip it in my inner jacket pocket. “Watch my car, and you’ll get a Franklin.”

“Are you going up to see Lori?” he asks. He knows Lori? Why doesn’t that surprise me?

“What if I am?”

He shrugs. “What if I want something else?” he retorts, gutsy and reckless. Something more than money?

I sweep my eyes over him. He doesn’t have a scorpion tattoo, not a visible one anyway, and his t-shirt and shorts are worn out and torn—and not as a fashion statement. He’s younger than the others, and there’s something about him. A hunger for life in his eyes.

“What’s your name?” I ask him.

It takes him a couple of seconds to answer, “Carlos.”

“What’s your name, Carlos?”

He bites his lower lip, “Spencer.”

“If my car is still in the same condition when I get down, Spencer, we’ll talk.”

He nods, and as I start climbing the stairs, the guys push back to the sides to let me pass.

The inside of the building is worse than the outside. There’s a smell of decay and lost dreams in the entrance. Broken glass covers the discolored, dirty floor. There’s no elevator, and the light coming from a dusty bulb flickers, scarcely illuminating the stairs. Ollie told me Lori’s apartment is on the fourth floor, so I start the climb, wondering why he lives in such a dangerous, run-down place. I know what I pay him, and he should be able to afford much better accommodations than this.

I reach his floor. The walls are covered in graffiti. Weird noises are coming from the first door I pass. The stench of cheap cigars is almost unbearable, but I can’t find the source of such an awful smell.

I stop in front of Lori’s door. It has a sticker that says “fuck off or lose a finger.” Bez smirks at that.

Rock music is coming from inside.

AC/DC. Fuck yeah! Bez growls. He's a huge fan of anything rock&roll.

After two knocks, I hear Lori's voice followed by crackling paper sounds.
“Busy! Sod off!”

“Open up, Lori!” I command, feeling more resolute than ever.

The music abruptly stops. Then I hear footsteps advancing and the sound of various locks opening before the door is yanked open.

Lori's mouth turns slack as he stares at me with a dumfounded expression. His nose is not red anymore, nor his forehead. He's wearing a big white t-shirt with a growling tiger on the front that reaches his fishnet stockings-clad thighs, and through the thin fabric, I can see one of those sports bras underneath, a purple one.

“You-you came? Here?” He looks stunned.

“Rague and Ollie will be here soon, too, with the van.” I look behind him to see a few open boxes on the floor in the tiniest studio I've ever seen. The kitchen is made of a one-burner camping stove and a mini fridge. A mattress is lying in a corner of the room and an armchair is on the opposite side near a door—the bathroom I suppose—in front of a very long hanging rack filled with clothes.

“The kidnapping van?” he asks, confused, as I nudge him to step inside the horrifying room. “I ordered them not to. And that doesn't tell me why *you* are here.” He nervously flaps his arms around, making the shirt rise dangerously higher. His legs are perfectly shaped and very bendy, if I recall properly.

You do, Bez states.

“I was on the phone with Rague when Ollie called you.” And I discovered that Lori has been evicted and refuses to move in with them.

“No privacy anymore! Stop looking at me like I'm a bug you're thinking of stepping on.” He fidgets, but holds his ground when I take a step toward him.

“Why are you so unsettled around me?” When he hit the glass door a few hours ago, he turned rigid hearing my voice.

He grits his teeth and straightens his spine. “I’m not. Can’t you see what I’m dealing with here? I need to be out tomorrow, even though by law, I have fourteen days after the writ is given.”

Hearing him use legal terminology makes my dick twitch inside my boxer briefs.

You’re a fucking freak, Gabe. I love it! Bez snorts.

Quiet! He’s talking.

“...I’d file a motion with the court to prolong it, but...”

“There’s no written contract, is there?”

“What give that away? The group of candy men outside the building or the sound of Mary Magdalene shagging per hour on the second floor?” he sarcastically counters, positioning his hands on his hips challengingly.

“Do you have your landlord’s phone number?” I ask him.

He moves to his mattress and grabs his sparkly phone, bending down and offering me an almost obscene view of the lower curve of his rear. Those jockstraps he wears are damn tempting, and paired with the fishnet thighs they absurdly work on him. Only on him.

After a couple of seconds, a beep on my phone lets me know I’ve received the contact.

“Keep packing,” I tell him, as I pull my cell out of my jacket.

“I’m not going to move in with Ollague. They have a lot on their plates as it is.”

“Ollague?”

“Rami’s power couple name for Ollie and Rague,” he explains.

I’ll say it again, your bros are idiots, Bez feels the need to repeat himself.

“Is that blood on your shoes?” Lori suddenly asks, frowning at the small crimson spots on my Oxford leather shoes. It must be from the dealer, I might have kicked his head a bit too hard.

Bez disagrees, *or too light*.

I ignore his question and state, “You’re not moving in with...Ollague. Now pack!”

“Bugger, you’re so bloody bossy! We are not in the office. I don’t have to do what you order.”

“Like you ever do that.” My brow kicks up.

He pouts. “Where am I moving th—?”

I interrupt him, “What’s the name of your landlord?”

He puckers his lips—that dip in the middle and the little mole on his upper lip keep catching my eye. “Uhm, he’s Octopus Prime to me. Maybe Jerry? Gerald? Joseph? Steve?”

“I’ll find out. Just—”

A loud knock cuts off my sentence.

“Sod off!” Lori yells.

“Open the door, sweet thing. It’s Carlton,” a deep voice says on the other side of the flimsy door. There’s a menacing note in every word.

I send a questioning look Lori’s way, and he starts...dancing like a lunatic.

He’s miming, Bez suggests.

What is he miming a heart attack?

Lori glares at me, making even larger gestures with his arms up and down, pointing at his phone and then the bathroom door.

He wants you to put his phone inside that room! Bez suddenly exclaims. He sounds very taken by the game.

Why would he want that? I ask him. Lori is now waving at my phone and then the door.

Because of whoever is knocking at his door, Bez replies.

Whomever, I correct him.

Shut it, Gabe!

Lori suddenly gives up and lets out an exasperated sigh as he makes his way to the door.

A tall guy with a beer belly and a leery look is waiting on the other side. The way he slides his eyes over Lori rubs me the wrong way. And suddenly, that t-shirt and fishnets I gave an appreciative look to when I first saw him seem indecent. I feel the intense urge to cover him up.

“Boxin’ up your things.” The guy’s voice is an annoying slur. “You know, if you need more days, we could reach an agreement enjoyable for the both of us.” He’s the landlord then.

The meaning of his words is quite clear, and I’m already advancing, catching his eyes as Lori mutters, “I seriously doubt that, you twat.”

“Oh, I didn’t know you had company.” The landlord pulls his pants higher on his round belly, giving me an indifferent look.

“I’m Mr. Boone’s lawyer. Even though he has no written contract, a verbal agreement in Illinois is binding. He still has three days to vacate the room.” I stop behind Lori, my front plastered to his back. He turns his head up to me with a questioning look. I ignore him, keeping my stern gaze on the landlord. My hand lifts to the door, holding the edge just above Lori’s head.

Pissing on your territory, such animal behavior, Gabe, Bez taunts me.

Animalistic behavior.

Fuck. You.

The landlord crosses his arms in front of his heavy chest. “Well, I have another person interested in the place. So...”

“And I can take a legal route to acquire compensation for damages since you’re not giving me the required time to leave,” Lori replies, making my dick plump inside my pants. “I’ll sue you for all you’ve got!”

“Looking at the state of this building, it is not gonna be much,” I comment, earning a snort from Lori.

The landlord scoffs, not in the least afraid of our words. “I can do the same about your infernal beast. I’ve got tenants complaining about screeching noises.”

Infernal beast?

“Wednesday is not a beast, you wanker! And in this neighborhood, the screeching is the last noise I care about.”

“An anonymous call will be placed to the Housing Development Authority, they’ll send a structural engineer to carry out a detailed inspection, and if they find any warning signs—which they will—” I look around the decrepit room. “Then the entire building will be declared condemned.”

The landlord grits his teeth, giving me a scrutinizing look, probably trying to discern if I’m bluffing, which I never do. I have no need for that.

“Commissioner Ghallary takes public safety very seriously,” I add, wanting this clown to disappear already. I rarely use name-dropping but if it make this fucker leave faster I’ll give him more.

“This area swarming with police, I bet the Scorpions would find it brilliant,” Lori sarcastically finishes.

The landlord moves his glare to Lori. “You think you can scare me with some fake lawyer and your empty threats?” He takes a hostile step toward Lori.

I act quickly, sliding the tactical knife out of my jacket as I wrap my arm around Lori, pushing him to the side and behind me. I hear an oomph from him as I let him go, but I’m already grabbing the landlord’s greasy shirt collar while pressing the blade to his throat.

His eyes widen with fear as I push the tip of the knife against his skin until I see a small drop of blood roll down.

Beautiful, Bez moans.

I stare menacingly into his beady eyes. “My threats are never empty, and there’s nothing fake about me. Mr. Boone will have this apartment for the next three days, and if something happens, anything at all, I’ll come back and use you as a blade sharpener for my vast knife collection. Are. We. Clear?” My tone is low but filled with warning and intimidation.

He tries nodding but has to halt the movement to avoid skewering his head on the blade. I move the knife and shove him backward, making him stumble until he crashes into the hallway wall. My callous stare stays on him as he hurriedly straightens, and with a hand against his throat, walks backward, finally reaching the stairs and descending them, tripping and slipping, until he finally disappears.

“Nice knife. Didn’t know coercion was part of a lawyer’s job.” I turn around, closing the door as I hear Lori. He’s standing, looking cute as fuck with a pout on his lips, a hand on his hip, and a bare foot tapping on the floor. “I can bloody take care of myself.”

“I know,” I reply dismissively, taking my handkerchief out of my vest to clean the blade slowly and meticulously. “Bathroom?” My hands feel dirty after I touched the sweaty landlord.

He points at the only door in the room, and I walk toward it. When I open it, I’m immediately attacked by a winged fluffy black bird wearing...a white feather wig. It pecks at my ankles, and when I move to the side to avoid the black beak, it dashes out and into the room, not clucking but...screeching.

“What is that?” I ask Lori, as he crouches down and tries to calm the agitated, black menace with a cooing voice.

“She is Wednesday, my hen.”

“I’ve never seen a hen that looks quite like that.” The *hen* is staring at me with her red eyes barely visible among the cloud of feathers covering her head.

“Come off it! And stop saying *that*. She’s a Polish hen, at least Ren thinks so. She was found half dead in a field. Her syrinx was damaged, that’s why she makes that high-pitched sound.” He lifts Wednesday in his arms and starts petting it like a cat. If there’s one person who can tame such a creature, it is Lori.

“You took her from the pet shelter.” I know Lori volunteers at the Pet Palace with the triplets.

“Yeah, one look at this cute face, and I was a goner.” The baby voice is back as Lori gazes at the odd short-winged bird with a total adoration I’ve only seen him gift Ollie and Sully.

A weird, ugly feeling stabs me in the chest. It’s dark and unpleasant.

You can’t recognize your emotions anymore, you constipated ox? It’s jealousy, Gabe, Bez boringly utters.

Of a hen, I deadpan.

We already stated that you’re a freak, he retorts.

“Hey, Gabe?” Lori’s call pulls me out of my inner conversation. His scrutinizing gaze has some confusion in the amber speckles. “Where did you go?”

“I’m here,” I say as I wash my hands in the tiny bathroom. “You won’t need any of this furniture.”

“I have three more days—um, thanks to you—to look for another place. Don’t know what I’ll need—”

“I have a place. You’ll stay with me,” I cut him off, grabbing some duct tape to close one box, which is overflowing. I put the tape down and start taking things out to reorganize them.

His full laugh stops when he catches my serious expression.

“That’s bonkers! Us living together would end up in misery and disaster,” he says in a warning tone.

“Seems extreme,” I tell him. “Grab the essentials. Rague and Ollie will bring the rest.”

“Gabe, let’s be real for a moment.”

“Let’s. If you remain here, your landlord will surely find a way to fuck with you. So, hurry up and get what you need.”

“Gabe...” he starts again, but my phone rings, and I let it without attempting to take it out of my pocket.

“Aren’t you going to get that?” he asks with a confused frown.

I always answer my work phone, unless what I’m doing is more important than the firm I built by myself. “I’m busy talking to you.”

“Bollocks, now I’ve seen everything.” His widened eyes are staring at me.

“Lori, for once do as you’re told and pack.”

He keeps his gaze on me for a long moment, then raises his arms toward the sky, mumbling something that sounds like torment and catastrophe.

We work in silence, Lori sending me questioning looks, me ignoring him and repacking whatever box he fills—under Wednesday’s eerie gaze.

I’m surprised he yielded so easily. I expected more sass from him. Ollie is right, Lori must be tired. I can see the fatigue pushing on his delicate shoulders and marring his lively energy.

“That one is fine!” Lori almost yells as I start to open the cardboard flaps of the last box. I catch only a glance, but it’s enough to make out what’s inside. An urn.

Lori yanks the small box out of my hands, and taking a pair of red shorts, closes himself in the bathroom—with the urn.

My Little Wasp has secrets, Bez rumbles.

I don’t like the possessiveness in his voice. It irritates me. My jealousy is increasing.

“I need to take Wednesday for a stroll before we leave,” Lori screams from the other side of a door.

A stroll with a hen, now *I* have heard everything.



It's been three hours since we left Lori's apartment, or the shithole as Bez christened it. We only had to carry the boxes, the metal rack, and the mini fridge down the stairs with Rague's and Ollie's help.

I introduce them to Spencer. The boy held up his part of the bargain and kept people away from my car. When I left with Lori, he was talking to Ollie—under Rague's vigilant eye—about the library café they opened with rooms available for a very low rent on the upper floors. It's for young people in need of a job and a place to stay, and Spencer might fit those criteria. He didn't tell me what he wanted in exchange for guarding my car, but he took my business card and told me he'd call.

I turn on the bed lamp, and the light suddenly illuminates my bedroom. A quick glance to my watch lets me know it's eleven p.m. Lori is in my extra room, newly turned into a guest room. It's incredible how fast money can make things possible—in this case a bed, a mattress, a dresser and a nightstand, plus a few more things the shop assistant threw in. Bez didn't see the need for another room. He wanted Lori in our bed.

I can't seem to forget the dumbfounded expression on Lori's face as he stepped inside my main living space, his bare feet came to a grinding halt—he'd taken his shoes off in the entrance. Wednesday was inside a cat carrier, her beak peeking out of the holes on the front.

“Holy bloody hellish shit!” he mumbled.

His jaw had dropped as he looked at the sleek modern design of the room with wooden heated floors. The furniture is all contemporary, with a plush cream-colored sofa in front of a glass fireplace. I didn't use the remote to start the flames within since it's too hot for that, and Lori hasn't seen yet how the natural light unfurls in the morning from the floor-to-ceiling

windows, offering a breathtaking view of the city skyline. He also didn't spend much time in the sparkling stainless steel modern kitchen directly to the right, even though it is fitted out with all the latest appliances. He only brushed his fingers over the massive, white marble island that faces the living area and spun one of the black barstools.

He commented, "Not too shabby," when I showed him his room, a large bedroom in cream and brown tones with a queen bed and a big wardrobe. Then he added that he was "shattered" and closed the door almost on my face. His "thank you" through the door amused me.

Not Bez. He wanted to tear the wooden panel down, but Lori clearly didn't want any company, so I forced my legs to move toward my bedroom and left the door ajar.

Just in case, Bez huffed.

One hour later, and I'm still staring at the dark gray walls while lying in the middle of my massive king-size bed. The white sheets feel crisp on my naked skin. I should be tired after the events of the day, but sleep evades me. Not for Bez. He can doze off in the blink of an eye.

I look around the room to distract myself. It's decorated with dark wood furniture, all masculine and sophisticated. The door to the left of the bed leads to the en suite bathroom and a large, flat-screen TV hangs on the wall. I quickly push away the idea of watching a movie. I think about texting Rami to ask how the search for Bailey is going.

When Lori was recovering from the drug, I forced myself to stay away from him. It increased the prickling sensation over my skin and only taking care of those three perverts who were inside the gallery room at Crimson placated it. They were scum. Rami found them easily through the club cameras and then did a thorough background that showed us what shitheads they were. But Philip Bailey is the one Bez wants, which is alarming. He hasn't shown any kind of murderous intent since we were kids.

I hear a sudden noise coming from the corridor. Lori left Wednesday in the extra bathroom, he said it calms her down, but maybe she found a way to get out.

I'm about to go check when my door is pushed open and Lori appears on the threshold. He's wearing a large gray jacket. My suit jacket from the night at Crimson.

A satisfied grunt builds in my chest at the sight of him wearing my clothes. And my bare cock hardens under the sheets. He doesn't say anything as he takes slow steps toward my bed. His curls look mussed and his eyes unseeing. He isn't looking at me, or at anything in particular as he keeps advancing.

"Lori?" I call his name, pushing my body into a sitting position.

"Yeah," he replies, still staring ahead. His eyes are glassy, vacant.

Is he...sleepwalking?

The bed dips slightly as he crawls onto it. He stops on his knees in front of me, bringing his arms up and looping them around my neck, pressing our fronts together tightly in the process.

I grab his hips to keep him still. "Lori, what are you doing?"

One of his hands slips down my back, fingertips tracing my skin with a butterfly touch. A shiver starts at the top of my head all the way down to the back of my knees.

Being touched by him, I discovered from that night we were drugged, is quite pleasing for me. Feeling him cling to me, wriggling closer, rubbing his body against mine is such an erotic experience. It succeeds in making my skin warm and my cock stiff with every little contact.

His moaning breath rasps in my ears. My hands twitch, eager to feel him under my palms, but I can't take advantage of him like this.

Why? Bez woke up. He's offering himself on a silver plate. Take a fucking bite!

He's sleepwalking.

To us! I knew leaving the door ajar was a good idea.

“Lori, you need to wake up.” My moan makes him tense for a few seconds, and in the next, he’s pulling the sheets off my groin and lowering his torso on the bed, directing his face toward my hard dick.

I grab his shoulders to hold him off, but his hands wrap around my cock and start pumping up and down. Fuck. They are soft and look small around my long shaft. I grunt at the pleasure they’re creating.

He must have had one of his dirty dreams, Bez groans with pleasure.

Concupiscent dreams.

Just relax and enjoy. Sometimes, I think Bez is the devil on my shoulder.

I can’t. But my hold on Lori’s shoulders is getting looser the more he works those amazing fingers around my dick.

He suddenly moves down. His hot, sexy lips wrap around my cockhead, and I feel fire rushing down my spine, reaching my heavy balls.

He starts sucking me like a pro all the way down, holding me for a second, tightening his throat around my length, and then pulling off, letting his twisting tongue have its fun around my dick. Until the tip is the only thing left inside his mouth, and he uses his vise-like lips to get more pre-cum to drip out. That dip on his lower lip creates a perfect cradle for my cock and the round arch on the upper lip curls deliciously around my tip.

Cock-sucking lips, Bez growls.

It’s the best damn blow job of my life. Forgetting about my guilty conscience, I run a hand in his hair and holding on to his curls, I make shallow thrusts inside his mouth. That mole near his lips stretched full of cock drives me crazy. But although I surrender to my lust, I know this isn’t entirely right.

“Lori, tell me to stop.” I groan as his fingers start massaging my balls.

Fuck, he really wants a hot load down his throat, Bez groans as well.

Lori pulls all the way back to hoarsely say, “Keep fucking my face. I want it, Gabe. Gabe.” He nuzzles my cock with his cheek, digging his nose into my pubic hair, inhaling deeply, and letting out an ecstatic sigh before

looking at me. His eyes look clear now. He's staring right at me with so much lust and want.

"Are you—?"

He doesn't let me finish. "I'm awake, Gabe."

I study him to make sure. With his eyes still on mine, his tongue licks a warm path from my balls all the way up my cockhead, leaving a slick, long, delicious line on the underside of my shaft. Then he takes me inside his mouth again.

Christ, he's my ultimate temptation. Impossible for me to resist, not with those dark amber eyes. Not with those sultry lips. Not with those silky curls and the curvy ass peeking out under my jacket.

The thought of Lori wearing nothing under my clothes makes my fingers tighten on his locks and my hips drive harder inside his mouth.

Utter bliss.

He takes me so damn good, moaning, hollowing his cheeks, and contracting his throat every time I push inside. I couldn't stop even if I wanted to. What is this?

What we both felt from the first time we saw him, Bez drawls.

Scorching obsession.

Bingo!

Lori's hand moves on my thigh, his nails dig deep into the skin, pushing me to speed up the rhythm.

"I'm-I'm close." He doesn't move away but relaxes even more under my ruthless face fucking. His eyes are watery, spit keeps drooling down his chin, and slutty noises are leaving his red, puffed lips. I've never seen a sexier sight.

"Swallow," I order him just before letting out a long groan as my cum shoots down his strangling throat.

When I pull away and drop to my back on the bed, Lori follows me. His tongue going up and down my shaft, cleaning it and making me jerk as he sucks relentlessly on the tip, searching for more jizz.

After a while, his adoring mouth moves to my abs, licking, nipping, and sucking a path all over my torso. My fingers keep lightly scratching his curls as I watch him savoring the taste of my skin.

“Your smell,” he moans, flattening his tongue on my nipple. I feel his flaccid, slick, bare dick against my thigh. He must have come while blowing me. Why does that fill me with deep gratification?

“Why are you wearing my jacket?”

“Safe,” he replies with a satisfied sigh, as he moves onto his side with his head nestled in my neck and his little hand on my chest.

Does my jacket make him feel safe? From what? A wave of protectiveness engulfs me.

I tilt his face up with my finger under his chin with the intention of asking him. But he has such a satisfied smile on his mouth, shiny with my cum, I’m moving without thinking. I suck on his plump lower lip as I taste myself on him. It quickly becomes my favorite flavor.

He let me come all over him at the charity fundraiser. What a fucking O that was, Bez growls.

Why didn’t you take over just now? I ask him.

You needed it more than I did, he says lightly. Bez rarely shows care for my well-being. If he does, it’s to get something else in exchange. I can’t see the reason why now. *Enjoy five more minutes of cuddling. Then it’s my turn.*

Lori’s hand lands on my cheek, his nails scratching the short stubble. I find this peaceful afterglow weirdly comforting. I never liked this kind of intimacy before. I abhorred it. But like everything else with Lori, it simply is.

The urge to have him close, to keep an eye on him, the jealous thoughts, the possessiveness, the need to take care of him. It is an obsession—he has

been one from the start. He slowly sucked me into his crazy universe, and my current spot feels right.

I can feel his warm, rhythmic breath on my neck. The weight of his body against mine. My hand on his ass cheek is molding the soft skin rhythmically. I want inside him. My dick seems to agree, plumping once again.

Too bad, Bez says just before taking over.

That was less than five minutes, Gabe argues, but it's too late. I'm here now.

"Wake up, Little Wasp. It's time to get fucked." My middle finger slides into the crack between his ass cheeks, brushing against his pucker. Lori lets out a low moan and automatically raises his knee higher on my waist, giving my finger more access.

I like when he's this obliging but even more when he fights me.

My other hand moves toward my stiff cock—my recovery time has always been fucking fast—I envelop it in a fist and start with slow pumps, focusing on the sensation of his fleshy rump under my fingers.

Lori's mouth is attacking my neck, sucking on the sensitive skin, causing goose bumps to erupt all over my arms and pre-cum out of my slit. I collect it with my fingers and pass it to my other hand, slicking my middle finger with it.

When I move back to his backside, Lori whimpers as the tip of my digit slides easily inside his already wet hole. Did he prep himself before coming to my bedroom? The thought turns me on more than it should.

"Spread those cheeks more," I grunt, upping the tempo of the pumps on my dick. It's hurting with want.

He makes that low erotic noise again and opens his legs wider. As I push all the way in, he throws his head back and gasps, his wet heat clenching around my finger in a way that, if it was my cock, I'd have come like a fire hydrant, too quickly.

“Do you like to feel my cum inside your ass?” I ask him, starting to finger fuck him with shallow thrusts.

“Mm, more.”

I want to do that so fucking much, but my Little Wasp is still too tight, I need lube.

First drawer in the left nightstand, Gabe reminds me.

After a few seconds, I’m holding the little bottle. With my thumb, I flip the lid and pour a generous amount on Lori’s crack. I go back to prepping him, inserting two fingers. He begins riding my hand so well, I add two more fingers. He hisses, but doesn’t stop moaning or fucking himself. His dick is hard as he rides my thigh at the same time.

“Fill me please,” he begs between sucking kisses to my throat.

When my fingers slip free of him, he gasps, and again when I push him belly down on the mattress and raise his ass up. The suit jacket has fallen down under his arms, giving me a vision of the submissive position.

Jesus Christ. I could come just from this.

“I’ve been hard as fuck all morning at work, thinking about you covered in my cum while wearing that hot dress at the fundraiser.” I’m sliding my cock between his ass cheeks, brushing his gaping hole. The sight, the feel, the sound of it is turning me feral.

“Oh, fuck, please tell me it’s not a dream,” he suddenly moans.

“Not a fucking dream. My cock filling you is as real as you drooling for it,” I growl. I push my hips back and glide right in. His pucker is convulsing, like it is pleading to swallow more, and I give it to him. All of it, with a hard, forceful thrust. His cry is filled with pleasure, and it goes on as I grind my hips against him, stretching his walls, getting a little deeper.

“Damn right. Squeeze the only cock you’ll ever get up your ass from now on.” I place one hand on the headboard, and with the other, I grab his hair and pull his head up toward the ceiling as I give him a harder thrust.

Nothing, nothing in the world has ever felt so fucking good. And I have all night to savor it; I'll fuck him for hours. Even better, I'll see how many orgasm I can tear out of him during those hours.

"Gabe! Oh fuck, oh fuck. You're inside me," he suddenly breathes as I keep railing his ass. "Not dreaming. Yes. Oh God." His face has slightly turned toward me, there's not much room for movement in this position with me keeping him pinned.

"Bez."

"W-what?" He whimpers as I suddenly stop, holding him impaled on my dick.

"Call me Bez," I order him, pushing even deeper inside. "Say it!"

"Will you bloody fuck me if I do?" my combative Little Wasp hisses angrily, making me grunt with pleasure.

"Abso-fucking-lutely," I growl, spitting on his hole as I pull back, dragging my dick along his walls.

"Bez." My name on his lips, and I'm assaulted by a primal impulse. I tighten my grip on the headboard for support before thrusting rough and merciless. My hips piston back and forth, gaining speed until I'm rutting into him, taking him like an animal, only intent on branding him inside.

I mutter, "Did you miss my cock? The way you're strangling it is answer enough." My grunts echo his slutty-as-fuck moans, and the slapping of my balls on his perfect, peachy ass. I spank it hard, grabbing the reddened flesh, feeling the warm skin under my palm.

"You'll never keep me away from this tight ass again." Another smack.

"Fuck, never! Love your dick! So bloody long. I want it to reach my throat," he screams, following the vicious movements of my hips. Every motion of his lithe body drives me harder, deeper.

"This is your master cock. You'll worship it every fucking day!" I growl mindlessly. I don't want this to end. But it's too incredible.

I want to live inside his hole, slowly get hard in it, feeling his walls making space for my plumping dick as it grows until, until they are stretched to the maximum, holding me inside him, massaging my length as pre-cum drips out, milking it as I shoot a load deep, so deep it will become part of him.

I am going to cum so damn hard.

Fill him, Gabe says.

Oh, I will. His hole will be so fucking full, it'll overflow.

My Little Wasp moans my name loudly, jerking underneath me and clenching around my cock so tightly, it almost hurts. Bliss bolts straight through me from my nuts up to my dick. Grabbing hold of his hip to keep us from separating, I release half of my load inside him. “Christ, you’re sucking it out of my dick.” And as my body is still rippling with pleasure I pull out, and with a groan I keep shooting on his back and taint. Jesus Christ!

I look at that ass covered in my cum.

“Mine,” I tell him as I drag my cock over his cum-filled, stretched hole, spreading more jizz around while aftershocks still rack his body. His orgasm keeps going for a while, and I feel pretty fucking good about it.

I let my body fall on the sheets, on my side. He looks like a sexy mess. Sweat covering his skin and the collar of the jacket, lips red-bitten, and chest heaving.

“Mouth,” I demand, pushing some curls away from his face. He turns his head toward me. Eyes filled with a daze and echoes of pleasure. He clumsily leans toward me but not enough, looking too exhausted. I have to grab his nape and pull him the remaining distance.

He opens those slutty lips, taking the slow and possessive assault of my tongue meekly. The kiss is long and dirty as I suck on his mouth and lick every inner part until he surrenders everything to me.

I push back, letting Gabe take over.

All yours, Bez tells me. I'll fuck him until morning next time.

Strange. You always keep your dirty word, I remind him. He simply replies with a sniff.

I tighten my hold on Lori's head and revitalize the kiss, pushing him onto his back. I nip at the delicious flesh, suck on his tongue, play with it in a twisting game until I have no more breath. When we part, his eyes are closed, face flushed. A small smile curls his mouth as he sighs contently.

My dick is hard again. I recognize the fact that the only reason is the man underneath me, lightly snoring. Obsessed doesn't even describe the tip of what I'm feeling.

I've tried so hard to repress my emotions. To never let them rule my life again. To feel in control. Bez is the impulsive one, certainly not me. Then Lori came into my life, and little by little, he dug a tunnel underneath the walls I'd erected around me. How did he do that? And is he going to accept what's on the other side?

Too late for that. Bez yawns. *Doesn't matter if he likes it or not. He's mine.*

He has a choice, Bez.

He just took a hard fuck, screaming my name. I'd say he likes me.

But he doesn't know you exist, I remind him.

He lets out a snort. *The real question is does he still dislike you?*

I roll off the mattress, feeling that prickling sensation over my skin again, and round the bed until I'm on Lori's side. I slide my arms under him and lift him up. He snuggles closer to my body, but doesn't wake up.

When I reach his room, the lights are out, but the moonlight from the window illuminates his bed enough.

I deposit him on the sheets and try to straighten up, but Lori's hands suddenly wrap around my neck, clinging to me with all his strength, which is impressive. Not expecting it, I topple onto the bed, crushing him under me. Lori doesn't seem to care that he has the weight of a man twice his size on him. If anything, he's relishing it.

"Lori," I call him.

“Stay,” he replies, sucking on my neck. I’ll be covered in hickeys again. The thought of having his bruises on me doesn’t annoy me. Quite the opposite.

“Let go.” He whimpers hearing my order. “I’ll stay.”

“Promise?” he asks me, taking me back to that night at the club. I can hear the same vulnerability filling his voice, it raises my protective levels exponentially.

“Promise.”

He drops his arms but nudges and prods me until I find myself wrapped around him in a big spoon position. My jacket that he’s wearing has risen over his hips. My dick is right between his ass cheeks, and as I pull slightly back to adjust, it finds his still slick pucker. He’s pure temptation. My only temptation.

“Yes,” he gives me his consent. And I push inside him once again. I fuck him slow and hard, enjoying deeply the way he moans with every thrust.

When he comes, it’s my name he gasps. And when I release inside him, it’s his name I groan in his ear. He drifts off to sleep, holding me to him tightly, his fingers laced with mine. My cock still inside his warm hole.

My insomnia doesn’t give me the same mercy, and I lie there for an hour, enveloped in Lori and lilies. When I untangle myself and stand up, he doesn’t stir. His drool feels cool on my forearm. I find it annoying and oddly cute at the same time. Like everything else about Lori.

I take a few more minutes to watch him. He’s still wrapped in my jacket. My lips twitch with satisfaction.

My eyes fall on the small unopened box on the dresser containing the urn.

We need to tell him, Bez suddenly says. *About you and me.*

I nod. *I know.*

eight

LORI



The next morning, I walk out of the bedroom after my princess beauty routine. My face looks well rested and fresh as a rose, while my ass is sore as hell. I remember every word, every thrust, and every moan with every step I take.

I think I got a bug, it's called Gabriel Reed.

The guest room didn't have a lock on the door, and I must have sleepwalked to his bedroom. I mean, I woke up with Gabe's cock in my hands! Sexsomnia is a new development, which is a documented disorder I read about as I tried to learn more about my somnambulism. The idea of having sex while sleeping seemed hot, even though the person has no memory of it in the morning.

Even better than what he did to me last night is forever carved on my brain. And if that isn't enough, waking up covered in Gabe's cum, having the proof of his desire for me on my skin, gives life to a nice quiver inside my belly.

I'm fucked, but not in the least shameful about what happened since it got me a magnificent dick inside my ass and filthy things whispered in my ears. It was bloody blinding.

My dick was as hard as a fucking length of steel and aching, dying to come. How could it not be when his strong hands kneaded my ass with such

enjoyment and his hard cock pressed against my hole, slipping between my cheeks. It seems that my bussy has taken an imprint of his glorious cock since that night at the club and now welcomes it with open doors.

Being fucked while wearing his jacket made me feel vulnerable, I hadn't wanted him to know about it. But I've taken to the habit of sleeping in it; it helps to soothe me somehow. His scent is gone—I had to wash it—but the way the soft fabric envelops me is like a forbidden, sexy business.

I might have rolled over in bed this morning as I'd woken up alone and coated in Gabe's cum, and buried my face in the pillow next to mine, breathing in the faint scent of his cologne.

I'm having the best sex of my life with Gabriel Reed. I can't believe how unpredictable he can be in bed. He went from dirty and aggressive, to silent and rough. The change is fast and unsettling, but so damn hot.

I look at the last door in the corridor, near Gabe's bedroom. What's in there? Probably a home office. I'll check it later, need to take care of my lady now.

I open the bathroom door, but Wednesday isn't inside. Her cardboard nesting box is missing too. She prefers to perch on high places above the floor at night—the shower rod is her favorite—but she lays her eggs inside the box.

I tiptoe down to the kitchen and halt as I see Gabe wearing a light blue shirt, brown vest and suit pants near the stove. The smell of coffee and food permeates the air. I take a few seconds to admire his perfectly round arse wrapped in expensive fabric.

A high-pitched cluck makes me turn. Wednesday is on top of one of the three brand-new roosting bars against the living room wall, performing a balancing act. Gabe must have moved around some furniture because that whole corner is exclusive to my hen, with her nesting box lying on the floor, a new bowl, a litter box, and some chew toys.

It doesn't fit very well with the apartment's white paneling and fancy wood floors, the surfaces polished so well, I can see my own reflection in them. The whole place is devoid of any other clutter though, leaving a very

minimalistic feel, chic and modern, sleek and screaming wealth—Wednesday is going to destroy it.

This is how the other half lives. When a door closes, a window opens. Didn't expect it to be in Chicago's most exclusive neighborhood, though.

The room smells like new, even though I know that's not the case. I catch a whiff of Gabe's scent, and I wish I could bottle it.

"Good morning." Gabe's calm voice makes me spin around toward him. He's sending me a very intense gaze that has the power to make the *collywobbles* take flight inside my stomach.

His sleek blond hair is, as usual, perfectly styled, beard flawlessly trimmed, but from the open collar of his shirt I can see at least three of the hickeys I sucked onto his skin last night. I'm surprised he isn't trying to cover them, even more so by the satisfaction spreading inside my chest.

"Morning," I reply, moving toward the counter on my bare tiptoes. I'm wearing a loose green t-shirt and a pair of tight white shorts. "Do you always wake up this early?" It's six thirty, I forgot to change the alarm on my phone. From Gabe's apartment, it will take half the time to get to work.

"I don't sleep much," he says. Is that why he left my bed?

"Do you always walk barefoot?" he asks.

I sit on a stool and glance down at my feet with red nail polish. "Yes," I reply. After fucking me twice into oblivion, talking conversationally about my bare feet sounds ridiculous. But I'm starting to learn that with Gabe, nothing is obvious.

He places a mug filled with hot water in front of me with a can of earl gray loose tea leaves—my favorite.

"Uhm, thanks," I tell him nervously, wiggling on the stool. I don't know how to act around an attentive Gabe. Not that he's ever been rude, but sharing things with him feels weird.

I start making my tea.

"What do you like to eat for breakfast?" he asks, back at the stove again.

“I’m not fussed.”

He turns his head to look at me, waiting for an explanation.

“I don’t care. Anything is fine,” I huff at his insistence.

Despite my gran’s best efforts, barely any of her culinary lessons stuck. I can burn everything, even water—well, the pot after the water has evaporated. But I can manage a salad or a cup of noodles. I’m still alive, aren’t I?

He sets his mug down with a determined thud. “Make a list. The housekeeper will buy whatever you want.”

Fancy. I nod.

He takes a plate from the kitchen and sets it near me again. There’s toast with eggs, ham, and a rich salad—again my favorite. A coincidence?

I love salads. Any kind. I always bring one to the office for lunch. I don’t do it because it’s a healthy choice—even though that’s a plus—or part of a diet. I just enjoy the crispy leaves, different kinds of vegetables you can add, raw, grilled or boiled and the cheeses and meats. And then the dressings. So many combinations. I used to love to create new types of salads, but the kitchen in my apartment is too small to make anything. So I’ve been buying them already made from a grocery store. Gabe’s kitchen is huge, perhaps I can start again?

“Aren’t you going to eat?” I ask him, seeing there’s no plate for him anywhere.

“Already did.” He makes an encouraging gesture toward my plate while taking a sip of his coffee. I get hypnotized by him for a second. His whole presence demands attention, but it’s more the fact that he is letting me stay with him in his apartment that holds my curiosity. It’s such a surreal situation, never in a million years would I have imagined Gabe coming to my rescue...twice. Or me accepting his help.

I move the ham and scrambled eggs onto the toast with my fork and take a bite. I can’t stop the moan slipping out of my mouth. This is the good stuff.

When I open my eyes, Gabe's slate gaze is zeroed in on my lips, and I can't resist licking the upper one. My coquettish nature can't be helped.

His eyes move to mine, and I gasp at the heated look he gives me. Then Wednesday makes one of her screeching sounds, and I lower my gaze to her. She's under my stool pecking on the ground looking for breadcrumbs. I absently crush a corner of my toast and drop it on the floor, snapping my eyes to Gabe to see if he minds the mess. He's staring at her with what I can only decipher as a scrutinizing look, since it's kind of hard to read him.

A previous thought suddenly comes back to me.

"The guest room bathroom is filled with beauty products," I start, spearing a few leaves of the salad with my fork aggressively. Fucking amazing products, which I'd die to use. And are not Gabe's. He has his own bathroom. So does he keep them for one of those escorts? Do they stay the night?

"Will you receive...visitors while I'm here?" It's evident that I'm prying. Because I don't like the idea of him with someone else. I feel a bit I'll-disfigure-whoever-touches-him jealous.

"No," he replies in his monotone voice, but then he adds, "They're for you."

"For me?" I mutter, almost choking on the last piece of toast.

"My housekeeper bought what you need yesterday. Let me know if you want more."

I blink rapidly, trying to clear the excessive questions filling my head.
"How did you know what I'd need?"

"Ollie."

"You...you asked Ollie." I sound incredulous. Because fuck, a caring Gabe ignites an atomic bomb inside my head.

"Yes. Ollie told me a few things you'd enjoy, and I bought them."

"For Wednesday as well?" I tilt my head toward the roosting bars and all the other new things he bought her.

“After a quick research on hens, I got a few things on the internet; they arrived thirty minutes ago.”

Wow. Just wow. He researched hens. Did I misjudge him all this time? Nah. I look at his emotionless face.

I take his answer at face value because who am I to question it? My life is a mess, and he’s shown me only kindness lately. Benefit of the doubt it is. So lawyer-y of me.

His insistent dark stare makes me bite down hard on my full bottom lip. He’s looking at me like he wants to rescue my mauled mouth. But after a few seconds, he takes a step back as he checks his watch and walks to the sink to leave his mug. He moves around, gathering what he needs for the office: briefcase, phone, etc... I try not to stare at him and make my way over to the leather couch on a rug that is softer than a cloud. As I let myself fall down onto it, Wednesday, with a vigorous flap of her wings, jumps down next to me. Her red eyes take me in for a moment before she gives me her back.

She only has three toes on one foot, and some of her feathers are missing on one side. Don’t know what she went through, but she’s still affectionate—for a hen—allowing me to stroke her feathers briefly before squawking and scurrying a few feet away with an indignant flap of her wings.

I see Gabe making his way to the entrance, hovering when he gets to the door.

“Is your gran in that urn?” Gabe’s sudden question makes my alarm bells ring like an ambulance on a call.

“Yes,” I say, gritting my teeth against the ugly sensation that always overwhelms me when I think about her last days on earth.

“Where does the money I pay you go, Lori?” His questions are like getting whiplash, they jerk me from left to right.

“Expenses,” I reply defensively, and pout my lips, feeling uneasy. I buy my clothes at thrift shops and rent my designer bags from a fabulous app, don’t spend much on food or rent. The largest portion of my salary goes to

hospital bills and my gran's house. She left it to me, and although I don't live there, I still have to pay when something breaks.

The neighbor, Miss Pool, goes once a month to check that everything is fine, and this winter, a small part of the roof collapsed just before the deck railing fell down and the asphalt in the driveway cracked. Then there's the property taxes. In short, cheerio salary.

I see questions twirling in Gabe's eyes, but he doesn't ask them. Instead, he utters, "Your hen looks restless."

Wednesday is near the balcony door, pacing left and right. "She needs to do her rat patrol." I move to the door and open it, letting her out. The stone railing is really high, she can't jump off.

"There are no rats on my balcony," he states. *So literal.*

"She wants to share spicy gossip with a passing pigeon, then." I shrug.

Gabe raises his usual eyebrow at me, then he says, "A car will be waiting for you downstairs at seven-thirty to take you to work. I sent you the driver's name, his photo, and the car's plate."

"I have a car. I can drive myself."

"The wiener mobile, as Rami calls it. The driver is for protection."

"Mr. Hot Shot and Bird Turd are still out there. It's for my own protection. I got it." I almost roll my eyes.

"It is for your own protection, and the rest of Chicago's population after I saw, once again, the way you drive last night."

That's why people wear slippers, to throw them at stupid, unmoving, handsome faces. He turns and leaves, closing the door before I can tell him where he can shove his driver together with the car.

Going to my room, I have no intention of following Gabe's order, when my phone on the nightstand beeps.

Gabe: Take the car with the driver. Look at it this way, he'll stop anywhere you want to go on the way to work.

Is he psychic as well? The proposition is tempting though. I have unfinished business I'd like to be done with. I decide that I'll take his suggestion to make a quick stop.

I open the small box I left on the dresser, and pushing the cardboard away, I gently place my gran's urn on top of it.

"You always said that life is unpredictable, like pear and cheese. You were right...as always." I kiss my fingers and place them on the metal lid. Sadness, guilt and melancholy fight inside me and I'm powerless against them for a minute.

Then I turn to the boxes filled with clothes and shoes on the floor. Where am I supposed to put them? The wardrobe is the tiniest I've ever seen and my metal rack is full already.

Which brings me to the next question: how long am I supposed to stay here?

I look at the dresser and open the first drawer. There's a huge box filled with every color and more of nail polish, all unopened. The next one has jockstraps in my size, still with the tags. The next brand-new sports bras. Are they all for me? Each drawer has something...especially for me.

How long did Gabe talk with Ollie for? The sight of all the purchases he made leaves me breathless. He took the time to call my bestie and then instructed his housekeeper—which from him, is huge. A sense of gratefulness floods me, and Gabe infiltrates a little deeper inside my chest.

I go to the bathroom and check all the products again. Some are things I normally use while others are brands I always wanted to buy, but couldn't. Then I go to the kitchen again. The fridge and cupboards have all my favorite foods and every possible ingredient to make delicious salads.

Bloody hell, I think my brain has just imploded.

Yesterday, when Gabe threatened my landlord, it made me want to kneel at his feet and show him my gratitude in a very specific way—didn't appreciate the damsel part, but seeing that side of him was bloody hot. But this? This means so much more to me.

I lie back against the counter, puzzled by Gabe's attentiveness.

Why is the man that spent the last months barely acknowledging me showing such care now?



Let's welcome whatever fresh hell today has to offer.

I got out of the car with a spring in my steps. Cheerfully thanking the driver/bodyguard, Arnold—he has more muscle than the real Schwarzenegger—I look up at the glass and concrete front of Reed Law Firm shining brightly in the morning sun. It's getting hotter really fast. The cute silky blouse and black pleated shorts I'm wearing feel a tad too warm on my skin.

By the time I push through the revolving doors, the guy at the entrance has recognized me and is greeting me. Despite the soreness between my legs I manage to walk to the elevators, waiting patiently to get to my floor. But when I arrive to my cubicle, all my stuff is gone. It's empty!

What the bloody fuck? Where's my Sponge Bob mouse mat? And my purple lava lamp? Someone is going to die if I don't get my Yoda pen back.

All my chirpy mood is gone, replaced by murderous intentions.

I march to the floor supervisor's office, the Sloth. As soon as he sees me, he smiles. He's a weird jolly bloke, always happy, but so damn slow—hence his nickname.

"Oh. You're here," he says.

"Where's my stuff?" I get to the point, or he'll try to keep me here all morning talking about his ant farm.

"You've been transferred." The Sloth relaxes in his chair, lacing his fingers on his flat stomach.

“This is utter tosh! Again? Why?” What did I do now? Maybe the right question is what didn’t I do?

“I’m going to miss your unique way of speaking.” He sighs.

“My transfer?” I remind him between gritted teeth.

“Oh, they didn’t tell me.”

This is bollocks. I didn’t do anything wrong...much.

He slowly stands up and tells me to follow him.

Fuming, I do. I know he’s only the messenger, but when I get to the one responsible, they’re going to lose their hearing—among other pieces.

We leave his office and move across the cubicles area, stopping in front of the elevator.

I get in, and remaining outside, he leans in and pushes the button for the top floor, waving his hand cheerfully at me.

The last floor? Gabe must have had a hand in this.

“The HR manager is waiting for you upstairs,” he says, as the doors close.

Evelyn is indeed upstairs in the reception area when I get off. I wave at Belinda, the receptionist behind the desk.

“Why am I up in the clouds, Eve?” I ask.

“Come.” She gives me a forced smile that has an ominous feeling to it. And bloody hell, that feeling magnifies the more we walk, passing by the conference rooms and the coffee room until I see Medusa’s empty desk. It reminds me that she got the boot, ha-ha.

I look at Gabe’s office door, but before we reach it, Eve stops in front of a room a few feet away from it. It’s quite spacious, with a window facing the front of the building, an empty bookcase, a small sofa, and a desk with a box filled with my stuff on top.

“What does this mean?” I ask her, entering the office.

“Sorry. Mr. Reed will see you in five minutes, please don’t make him wait,” she lets me know before walking away. Not very helpful, but I doubt Gabe gave her any explanation either.

Looking at the nice office, I try to find a reason to this morning’s madness. Am I a charity case for him? After he saw my apartment did he feel pity toward me? Does he think I don’t know how to take care of myself? Or is this some kind of bonus in exchange for sex?

Every further explanation I find leaves an increasingly bitter taste inside my mouth. Anger burns blazing hot in my gut, climbing my chest, spreading inside my throat. I feel like I could open my mouth and breathe fire. Not caring how much time has passed, I leave my Miu Miu bag on the desk and stomp toward his office. Without knocking, I open his door and slam it shut behind me with an ample swing of my arm.

“You!” I yell.

“Who was the guy you kicked in the balls?” Gabe’s question makes me lose my momentum.

He looks not at all surprised by my barging in.

“How...?” Arnold, I find the answer to my own question. He must have told Gabe about my quick stop. “Let’s just say he deserved it.”

Before coming to work for Gabe, I was fired because my ex-boss’s son badmouthed me to his father after I pointed out more than once how incompetent at being a lawyer he was. His father didn’t believe me, and I ended up jobless until I was hired at Reed Law Firm.

“And I didn’t kick him, I wouldn’t get my platforms near his STD-infested dick. Punching it wasn’t enough, but still very satisfying.”

Gabe stares at my hands with a questioning look. “Don’t worry, I bathed them in Purell.” I wave my fingers at him.

His phone starts ringing, but he doesn’t pick it up, and suddenly, I remember why I’m here.

“Why am I being transferred again near your office? I won’t be your PA. I’m a paralegal. I’ve even gone back to school to become a lawyer at some point,” I aggressively declare, taking two forceful steps toward his desk.

“You have?” He tilts his head to the side studying me with his gray gaze. “Why did you stop studying?” he asks.

“Gran was sick. We needed money,” I tell him quickly. “I’m taking online courses now. Stop avoiding my question. Why am I here?”

“Because you enjoy coming inside my office uninvited, it seems.”

Lord almighty! I can kick him in the shin, pinch his thighs, twist his nipples, or climb him like a tree and ride him until sunset. All viable options.

The fastidious ringing keeps resounding within the four walls. “Do you mind telling your phone to sod off?” I cross my arms and send him a heated glare.

He grabs the blaring device and answers it with a heated, “Sod off!” before hanging up.

“Did you...? What was...? What?” My brain seems to have short-circuited. He’s doing it again, going hot and cold.

“Did I render you incoherent?” he taunts me. His hand rubs over his jaw in what seems like a lazy motion, but it hides a well-rehearsed dominating act I’ve seen him use with other lawyers from the opposition. He stands up, and rounding the desk, stops in front of me, forcing me to tilt my head all the way up.

“I’m not one of those supercilious, stuck-up blokes you work with. You can’t play me.” I poke him in the chest and turn the glare up a notch. “And I’m certainly not a pity case or a slag. You can’t make all the decisions and move me around like a puppet.” Huffing like a dragon, I’m about to turn around and leave when he says, “I know, Lori.”

“Then what the bloody hell is your problem?” I yell. If I didn’t love my curls as much as I do, I’d tear them all out in exasperation. “You were forced to fuck me in that club, but then you covered me in cum all jealous

as shit at the charity event and left me with a shrug. Next, you moved me into your apartment with no explanation, and I woke up this morning alone and with dry jizz all over me. In the kitchen, you acted like nothing happened. Just give me some damn instructions because I'm lost here. Or is that what you want? I'm off my trolley here!"

"No." I see him clenching his teeth. "It did happen," he growls, full of fire. And in front of my eyes, he becomes another person. "Come here, Little Wasp." That nickname again, and that stronger accent too.

"Are you certifiable?" I ask, puzzled by him.

His eyebrow rises up mockingly.

"I'm serious, you just... Who are you?" I take a step back, and he narrows his eyes at me. I know he doesn't like that I'm putting space between us.

"I'm not."

"Then just explain to me why one minute you are your usual self, icy and unfazed, and in the next you look at me like...like—" I swallow hard.

"Like?" he drawls sexily, taking a step toward me.

"Like you want to eat me."

He smirks predatorily.

"Fuck. Stop that!" My voice has risen to a shout. I'm panting, red-faced, my hands twitching to do...something. Shake him. Rip off his clothes. I'm not sure.

The smirk falls, and a muscle in his jaw jumps. No wonder, with how tightly he has it clenched.

"I had DID," he confesses.

DID. Dissociative personality disorder. I had a client with that condition a couple of years ago. I try to remember what I learned about it, searching inside my memories. DID is a mental health condition that can cause gaps in memory and hallucinations. A person with DID has two or more distinct identities. The "core" identity is the most present personality. "Alters" are

the alternate personalities. These identities control behavior at different times. Each identity has its own personal history, traits, likes, and dislikes.

“I have a separate personality, an alter, Bezaliel. Bez.” It’s confirmation that I’m talking to Gabe now, and that he’s the core identity.

Wait a minute. He asked me to call him Bez in bed last night. Too high on pleasure, I really hadn’t thought much of it. Did I have sex with his alter last night? Is that why the first time he was so wild and dirty, and then in my bed he turned silent and although rough, more tame?

“We are very different from one another. Opposite. He used to come out anytime he perceived danger when I was a kid to defend me,” he says matter-of-factly.

DID is usually the result of sexual or physical abuse during childhood. Sometimes it develops in response to traumatic events like...

“Did you develop it because of what those scientists did to you?”

“No. Those years made it progress, but it started way before. Having an abusive father who liked to beat me and my mother to a pulp gave life to Bez.”

The disorder is a way to distance or detach from a trauma. “Fuck. Is your father still alive?” I ask, already creating a plan to kill the maggot.

He shakes his head, his lips twitching slightly. “Bez disemboweled him the first time he came out. I have no memory of it.”

“How old were you?”

“Six. My mother took the fall and ended up in jail. Social services came to pick me up, but I never made it to a group home.”

Because he was kidnapped.

“When Meg found me, Bez was in full control. She used psychotherapy and hypnotherapy to try to help me work through my past traumas, manage sudden behavioral changes, and merge my separate identities into a single one. The latter didn’t happen.” His hand lifts to delicately push away a wild curl from my forehead. I don’t back away. I just keep staring into the

deepness of his eyes. It's such a marked contrast to the cold, untouchable vibes he usually radiates. Could it be that his outer aloof appearance is an illusion he hides behind? He wards off people so he doesn't have to interact with them. Doesn't have to explain or act differently, not more than needed.

"And your mom?" I ask.

"She died in prison." His hand drops, and I miss the light brush of his fingers on my face. "It happened a long time ago." I nod, knowing very well that time only smooths the edges of a loss that big. It always remains with you. Together with the guilt.

Is that why he chooses donors who hurt women? Because of his past history?

"You said you *had* DID."

"I don't feel like having an alter is a mental disorder anymore. It's not distressing for me, but more affirming. I don't like labels, but multiplicity is now a word that fits better my selves. I found a balance within us thanks to Meg's therapy and Linda's support. It's called co-fronting. It's a specific type of co-consciousness. Bez and I switch without amnesia happening or dissociation in memory. We are both in control of the body at the same time to varying degrees. We try to give each other what we need and find compromises."

Wow. "So, he's listening right now." Gabe answers with a nod. "Do you talk to each other?"

"Yes. But Bez is not the talkative type."

He is when he shags me. "Then you have one thing in common," I joke.

"I've discovered we have more than one lately." His gaze turns intense all of a sudden. "You don't seem troubled by what I'm telling you."

I pout, placing my hands on my hips. "Did you expect me to run out of here screaming bloody murder?"

"In the past it made people uncomfortable, waiting for the freak show to start."

“So, you think I’m just like other people?” The thought annoys me greatly.

“Bez thinks you’re a Little Wasp.”

“So every time you called me that, it was him?”

He nods.

Finally some clarity. I smile at that, which seems to irritate Gabe. But his cold and hot behavior makes more sense now—*their* behavior.

“So, you’re fine with it?” he asks.

“I don’t know much about multiplicity. But I like to think I’m starting to know you, Gabe.” My hands lift to rest on his pecs. “I’ll learn to know Bez as well.” I wink at him.

“Take off your shorts,” he orders me abruptly. His look is molten heat as he slides his jacket off his wide shoulders and tosses it on the sofa.

“Excuse me?”

He rolls his sleeves and starts to unbutton his suit pants next. His dark gaze doesn’t waver. “You heard me.”

“I don’t understand why you think I’d follow any of your commands like one of your minions.” I scoff.

“Don’t you want to be fucked?” He pushes down his black boxer briefs and wraps his fingers around his beautiful cock while sliding a pack of lube from his pocket.

Yes, I do, so fucking much!

Gritting my teeth, I swallow, hypnotized by the way he opens the pack with his teeth and then pours the lube all over his length.

Oh, sod it! I hate to yield so bloody easily, but I can’t resist him. I yank my shorts down and off, leaving my jockstrap and platforms on. As I start to turn around, he grabs my hip and pushes me until my back is against the wall. His hand slides slowly down, his mouth an inch from mine, breathing on my cheek. His palm reaches my arse, giving it a hard squeeze that makes

me gasp, and my lips part. Then he lifts my leg and opens it wide to the side.

My arms wrap around his neck. “You like how flexible I am, don’t you?” I whisper temptingly, giving his upper lip a quick lick.

A low growl comes out of him, his voice turns raspier. “I like more the sound of fucking you raw.” Two slick fingers brush lightly against my pucker before pushing all the way in, making me moan.

His gruff dirty words... “B-Bez?”

“Yes. It’s me.”

“Where did Gabe go?” Fuck, why do I like this so much?

“I’m here.” The fingers inside start a scissoring move, and I whimper, loving every second of this.

“It’s Gabe’s turn now, Little Wasp,” Bez lets me know as another digit slides inside me, and the rough finger-fuck forces pre-cum out of my tip.

“Turn?” I ask. Does it mean he’ll have his later?

“You’re mine now.” Gabe is back, whispering in my ear as he pulls out those magic fingers and pushes his cock all the way in. The air leaves my lungs, and my body arches, welcoming his shaft even deeper.

There’s no more talking as he fucks into me furiously. Gabe wraps one big hand around the back of my head, tugging it back hard, tangling his long fingers in my hair, and forcing me to look into his eyes. He’s staring at me with so much fervor, it takes my breath away. His arm under my knee pushes my leg wider as he keeps pistonning inside of me.

His long cock reaches even deeper in this position, hitting my prostate repeatedly. I keep moaning like the eager cock taker I am, and I don’t care if they can hear me outside the office. I like the idea of people knowing what we are doing. What the boss is doing to me. How little control he has around me.

I’m consumed, utterly consumed by him. I’ve turned into such a slut. I’ve always liked sex. Just never at this bloody level.

Grunts escape his lips as his gaze flickers from my mouth to my eyes, dropping to my mouth again as his chest rises and falls visibly.

He grips my jaw. "These lips..."

I nod in invitation, and his mouth meets mine with the same unwavering confidence he has in everything he does. His lips are firm and demanding. Warm. In total control. Until I open mine and fight back. My tongue pushes in to taste him, and I get lost as he groans with satisfaction.

His hand lowers to my jockstrap and pulls, hard. I hear a tearing sound, and then as he shifts, his abs start rubbing my bare cock with every fast drive of his hips.

My eyes cross as Gabe becomes the center of my universe.

I find myself eager to please him and obey him as I surrender to the kiss and he swallows all my screams.

A fire ignites deep down where I'm wanting and longing. Every bit of emptiness I feel is eradicated by the long, warm cock inside my channel. By the bruising grip on my hair and my leg. By the commanding tongue in my mouth.

When he breaks the kiss, my head falls back against the wall, but his hand cushions the hit. I feel dizzy and short of breath.

I'm so close. "You feel so good inside me," I whisper in his ear, sucking his lobe and then nipping his neck.

"Yes," he groans, pushing my mouth more firmly against his already marked skin as he tilts his head to the side to give me more access.

The bucking sound of his hips slapping between my thighs, his balls smacking against my arse, my back hitting the wall as he rams into me on overdrive, it's so damn obscene and filthy. It's the most arousing sound.

His hand slides down once again, wrapping around my desperate cock, and a full-body tremor takes hold of me just before my climax hits. It feels like a volcano erupting, hot lava works from my balls out of my dick, and I bite hard on his shoulder, moaning all my bliss. He fucks me through it, chasing

his own release. It comes pretty soon. He lets out a toe-curling grunt and spills hot cum from his jerking cock inside of me as I'm still trembling in his arms.

“Christ!” he moans. *Exactly.*

My breathing is chopped. My climax has made me weak in the knees. Gabe grabs both my thighs and lifts me in the air, keeping his dick tucked inside me. The movement pushes him deeper, and I whimper, feeling more cum dripping down.

He places me on his desk, his fingers in my hair, scratching my scalp. How can having my curls fondled feel so good?

My lips are brushing against his neck, nose nuzzling, inhaling my favorite scents: Gabe and sex. Don't know how long we stay like this, maybe only a few minutes. He slowly pulls back, cock still hard and slick. Eyes on my leaking hole. I feel his cum dripping out, but I don't move to clean myself. I can't.

Gabe is sucking his fingers. He's tasting me, and judging by his blown pupils, he bloody likes it.

“My time.” The deep growl is followed by a devilish smirk, and I know it's Bez now in front of me.

“What a fucking vision!” His gaze is on my dripping hole. “It makes me... hungry.”

He slowly kneels in front of me, and now I'm the one with the best vision. Gabe—Bez at my feet, ready to devour me. Fingers crossed.

“Thanks for this.” I pull on the torn red jockstrap hanging from my hip. It was one of those new ones I found in the dresser drawer.

“I had nothing to do with that. Need to thank Gabe.” *Really?* So, Bez is not the caring type. Got it.

He raises my left foot. “So fucking sexy. Will fuck you in these shoes next time.”

“You'll fuck me three times, then. I have them in red and green, as well.”

He groans, and I smile at him as he places a kiss on my ankle. Then gasp and moan loudly as he licks from my calf to my thigh, his hot tongue slowly sliding upward cleaning up all the jizz he encounters with his gaze firmly on mine. He gives the same treatment to my right leg, and when he reaches my hole, he unceremoniously widens my legs as open as they can go to give me the best rimming of my life.

His tongue spears my pucker, sucking, twisting, licking me clean. I can feel how much he's enjoying it, eating me with such greed, tasting his cum rolling out of me. My cock starts hardening again under his assault.

A tendril of desire shoots up my channel, making me shake. It feels too fucking good. When he moves and sucks on my balls, I fall back on the desk and arch toward the ceiling. My green nails find their way into his hair, and I'm making the sluttiest noises I've ever uttered.

He swallows my dick in his hot mouth next, and only the need to look at him with my cock between his lips stops my orgasm. It's torture but so bloody worth it as I push my heavy head up and gaze at him.

His blazing gray eyes are on my face while he sucks me with all he's got, dragging the head of my cock back and forth over his tongue. My fingers take hold of his locks, and I start guiding him up and down, loving the dirty bobbing of his head, the filthy slurping sounds he makes. He takes me perfectly inside his hot-as-hell cavern.

He suddenly shoves three fingers inside my gaping hole as his other hand fondles my balls, and I see stars. My hips buck a couple of times, going deeper inside his throat before I come. Currents of pleasure rush up and down my body as I shake all over, lost in my ecstasy.

Bez doesn't pull back until the last drop. Then he stands up, pulls me into a sitting position and opens his mouth, showing me my cum still on his tongue. He lets some drip on his hand and wraps it around his cock, then he grabs my cheeks and forces my lips apart as he spits the rest inside my mouth. "Taste yourself, you're fucking delicious, Little Wasp."

I swallow and smile. He's so filthy. So unrestrained.while Gabe fucks me all demanding and full of vigor. Can't decide who I like more.

Bez's hand starts moving on his length. I swallow, and he growls before his tongue pries my mouth open. I've never had my mouth so thoroughly explored before. He licks and sucks and nips every part, inside and out. Like a possessive beast. Everything goes hazy until he pulls back to beat himself off. His eyes move over me like searing flames, the desire present inside them is breathtaking.

"This ass is so fucking needy. Needy for cock." The fingers inside me become four, stretching me until it stings. But every time they pull out, I follow them, wanting them back in. "Keep riding them, open up that tight hole. Want to slide in there without prep one day. You'll be always ready and gaping for me."

Fuck, that's hot. "Keep talking," I tell him, batting his hand away from his dick as I spit on both of mine and start jerking him off, imitating the tempo he was following. He feels so hard and smooth under my fingers. So... mine.

The thought puzzles me for a second, but then Bez's dirty talk starts again. "You like it? When I tell you filthy things as I own your ass?"

I moan. My dick is spent, enjoying its orgasmic coma, but I feel tingles all over my body every time he opens those sexy lips.

"Pump those soft hands faster. Just like that. Mmmm. Those fucking lips, been wanting to fuck them since the first time you pouted at me. Gonna stretch them good and make them puffy every day, right here on this desk so everybody will know whose cocksucker you are. You'll learn to give head like a damn porn star, you'll follow my directions and suck me dry."

Oh, Lord, help me. Why am I not telling him to sod off? Because I want to do all that.

"This will be one of your daily duties. Sucking your boss's cock and filling your belly with cum. Keeping it there while you're walking around the office."

I whimper, biting my lower lip. I twist my hand on the tip as the other keeps pumping the length. "Your cockhead is bigger, love it when it breaches my

hole. Ahhh,” I scream as Bez pulls back, making my hands drop, and removes his fingers from inside me to fill me up with his cock once again.

“Tight and wet, just how I like it.” He grabs the edge of the desk and starts rutting into me.

“Listen to how heavy you made my balls. They are slapping your ass just as they will slap your chin every time I fuck inside your mouth. Want you to drain them. Do you want that?”

I nod and squeeze my walls. With a snarl, Bez shoots deep inside me, and I smirk smugly, very proud of my contracting skills.

“Fuck, yes. Take all my load. Such a good cum taker. Milk it.” He groans as he keeps filling me.

“Squeeze those ass cheeks and keep it inside,” he tells me when he pulls out.

“I’m not a magician. What goes in, has to come out,” I retort, finding some of my spunk back.

His hand is suddenly around my throat, and his gruff voice sounds threatening. “Let someone else touch you, and he’s dead.”

“What if I don’t let you touch me either?” I glower at him because I can be submissive while fucking with him, but I’m no submissive in life.

I expect a smug reply since I let him do whatever he wanted to me before. Instead, his grip loosens until his hand shifts to my cheek, and he moves back a little.

“It would be hell not feeling this smooth skin under my fingers, your lips sucking mine, your hole opening around my cock.”

Ha...Fuck.

His hands on my face and on my thigh burn. I can’t move my eyes from his. He has me in a thrall. I get lost in those silver orbs. My lips find his palm where the small cuts from the broken glass are almost healed, and then over his wrist to the number five that those sadistic scientists burned into his skin.

“Say my name,” he whispers darkly.

“G—Bez.”

He smirks, and then he kisses me—omph—so deep and passionate, I don’t know whose air I’m breathing. Am I breathing? What the fuck is this?

Our mouths part, but my endorphin-saturated brain needs several seconds before turning back on. I become aware of a noise, a rustling sound. He’s fixing his clothes, pulling down his sleeves, and zipping up his pants.

I slide down the desk, get rid of my ruined jockstrap, tossing it into the wastebasket, and go pick up my shorts from the floor. My fingers itch to reach out to him, the gut-deep craving I have for him is worrisome. It got worse after he confessed to me about his multiplicity. But I’m not going to touch that with a ten-foot pole, or him at the moment.

The poised way he holds himself now, with such grace and solemnity, indicates that Gabe is back. Bez looks more at ease in his skin, confident and predatory. I can recall more differences now, if I think about it.

Wanting to fuck with him a bit, I bend down to retrieve the files and pens we dropped from the desk to the floor, being sure to put on display my cum-covered, amazingly shaped tushy. The air turns still, and when I look back to check on him, keeping my obscene position, his eyes are laser-focused on my arse.

“Be ready at five,” Gabe says hoarsely. He takes a step toward me, but then stops and clinches his beautifully-shaped hands. So stubborn. So controlled. So damn sexy.

I straighten up.

“For?” I ask, sashaying my way to his private, giant bathroom to clean myself. I’m never going to use the floor restroom again.

“We need to do some shopping.”

I turn off the water and dry my hands. The shorts are back on when his words register. “Shopping?” I stop checking my makeup in the huge mirror, baffled by his response. He already bought me loads of stuff.

“Don’t like to repeat myself,” he says haughtily. When I leave the bathroom, he’s finishing fixing his desk.

“Why? It’s fun. You are an arse, Gabe. You’re an arse, Gabe. You’re an arse, Gabe. See?”

His head snaps my way, and with two strides, he’s on me. His hand grabs my nape, pulling me on my tiptoes, and his mouth forces a dominating kiss on mine. It’s rough, and so fast, I have no time to enjoy it fully or to give him hell—with my lips and teeth.

“Be ready.” His voice is warm on my lips and filled with command, it starts a shiver down my spine. My sleeping cock is dead to the world, though.

“Like bloody Pretty Woman,” I comment sassily. He raises a brow at me and then sits behind his desk.

“You still didn’t tell me the reason of my transfer.” I anchor my platformed feet on the floor, parting my legs slightly and crossing my arms on my chest, telling him with my eyes that I won’t leave unless I get an answer.

He laces his hands under his chin, elbows on the desk. “I followed your cases while you were away. You did an excellent job helping the associates. All the clients were very satisfied by the consideration and time you granted them. The pro bono cases you took on were tricky, especially the break-in in that nursing home. But you found a way. I’m impressed.”

His praise leaves me once again speechless, which annoys me to no end. Is he a vampire feeding on my cognitive communication? With every kiss, he sucks some of my sassiness away.

“That’s why I decided to let you work directly with me.” And keep me in line. His choice of wording surprises me once again though. He said working *with* him not *for* him.

“You’ll choose the pro bono cases and have carte blanche unless you need me, and also help me with the rest of the cases. You’ll leave two hours earlier to go back home and study for your law degree. I could put a good word in with the dean at the Chicago-Kent College of Law.”

I don't particularly like assisting my arse off for most of the associates, the pompous, arrogant pricks. Would it be different with Gabe?

"I..." I clear my throat, trying to understand once again what his motivation is. Nothing in life is free. "Are you doing this because we're having sex?"

"Do you really think that little of me?"

I shake my head, and with a smirk, I say, "Nothing is little about you, Mr. Reed."

That little twitch is back on his lips, but no smile appears.

Working with the notoriously renowned Gabriel Reed would be a coveted experience to add to my resume. He's sort of a legend in the legal circles, rarely loses a case. I can learn a lot from him—not that I'd ever admit it to his face—while enjoying a hard dicking from Bez or Gabe. Or both.

"That's a very generous offer, and I accept the work part, although I foresee blazing battles and flying objects." The prospect of angry sex, though, is a mega bonus. "But I won't accept favoritism. My online classes are fine for now." I started them at a leisurely pace after Ollie went back to university a few months back. Seeing how excited he was reminded me how much I enjoyed my courses before Gran got sick.

Gabe nods way too easily. Fake compliance is my thing! I abhor it unless I'm the one executing it. But I'm intrigued by the battle of wits we'll engage in. I want to see what strategy he's going to use to try to make me do what he wants.

Challenge accepted.

"Okay. I accept your...offer," I state, hoping my wording will remind him that this is my choice.

He nods and turns to his computer. I'm not irritated by it. I'm still floating on my post-orgasmic cloud.

Guess it's time to go. The little devil on my shoulder pushes me to go and sit on his lap, to disturb him a little more. But I have a new office to convert into my own fabulous pied-à-terre.

Warmth blossoms over my chest at the thought of spending more time with Gabe and Bez in the office. Ollie has turned me into such a mushy idiot.

A bubble of excited laughter threatens to burst out as I make it to my office, and my heart is still beating a funny rhythm by the time I close the door behind me. I look around and release a satisfied sigh. I got thoroughly fucked, and now I have a large office on the top floor of one of the most prestigious law firms in Chicago. This is the farthest thing from fresh hell that I've ever seen.

A new shiny laptop stands out on the white modern desk. My pink ergonomic chair feels great against my abused butt. I pull it closer to the desk and fire the laptop up. Then I type DID and multiplicity in the search browser.

There's a lot of information, mostly from psychiatrists and therapy centers. I click on a blog created by people with both conditions. There's also the point of view of their loved ones.

I get lost in it, and only later, I realize how invested I already am in this pseudo relationship.

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nine

GABRIEL/BEZALIEL



I used to think that I liked my life. The routine, the privacy, the long nights working by myself.

Now I find myself standing in front of my walk-in closet. It's split down the middle, and it's clear which side belongs to Lori and which one is mine. His is a clash of fabrics in every color, pattern, and style imaginable. Some things no one but him could pull off—like the neon pink yoga pants or the fluorescent green furry sweater. That sheer, black fishnet bodysuit looked extremely hot on him, so damn hot that I nailed him against the first wall I could find in my apartment yesterday as I came back from the office.

I take a deep breath. It's like feeling him linger in the air, a faint thread of lilies everywhere I go, winding its way through the whole apartment. He has permeated the house this last week, left his imprint everywhere he walked and sat. Like a bomb, he exploded, invading my space, leaving pieces of himself in each room. Bras, makeup, shoes, hair accessories. It irritates me greatly, he's a slob. Nevertheless, I like him here sharing my stuff, seeing him walk rumpled from my bed to the closet every morning in his skimpy t-shirts.

His absence would be more real and felt deeper than his presence, and the fact that he halts the uneasiness in me is not the only reason. The abrupt certainty unsettles me. The thought of not being around Lori ever again

leaves me with a hollow, sick feeling all the way from my chest down to my very soul.

He's never going to fucking leave, Bez states. Still under the illusion that he has any kind of power over him.

With the way we wake him up every night, hard cock fucking one of his holes? Abso-fucking-lutely. He loves that shit, he insists.

I still recall his shocked gasps, head tossed back, mouth hung open, his breathy moans as I rolled my hips the way he likes. I've never felt my groans reverberate so deeply in my throat, such grit in the sound, my dick pulsing repeatedly while stretching his walls until he whimpered.

My cock turns half hard at the thought. Bez especially likes to fuck Lori when he sleepwalks to our bed—he still does it at times—or falls asleep on the sofa while watching one of his gory movies. I prefer to take him to bed and slowly have my time with him when he's wide awake. It doesn't matter to Lori, he's always eager to take us anyway we want.

I turn around and step on one of Wednesday's squeaky toys. She doesn't like them, squawks at the sound, and proceeds to stomp on them with her clawed feet. I also found out that she's a skilled pickpocket. With her beak, she can get to anything but seems especially fond of my wallet. She runs incredibly fast on those stick legs when I try to get it back.

When we went shopping a week ago, Lori brought Wednesday in a pink baby carrier, stating that his lady needed all the fresh air she could get. The hen seemed to like it, staring at me with that red, empty gaze. She didn't cluck even once while we went from one shop to another.

I expected Lori to buy things for himself, but he chose some items for my apartment, more things for Wednesday, a few small presents for Sully and Ollie. Only when we stopped at his favorite thrift store did he choose some things for himself. I still saw the way he stared longingly at some designer bags in a shop window. I know he rents his from some weird app.

So I bought two and gave them to Lori that night, earning a beaming smile and a koala hug, while my dick got the ride of its life.

Lori will get a bag collection, Bez says.

No arguments from me.

Of course not. Your dick is on board, finally. Bez lets out one of his low chuckles.

The only thing Lori loves more than bags is the law and all its loops and twisted facets. I come back home every night and find him listening to rock music on the sofa with his nose in thick books, studying hard for his course. I know he has what it takes to become a great lawyer. Passion, persistence, and a sharp mind. I find myself thinking of ways to help him without letting him know. He's used to doing things by himself, and I admire his perseverance, not so much his stubbornness. Don't like his petty little revenges.

I took his wiener mobile to my mechanic a couple of days ago, a diagnostic was long overdue on his old car, and Lori is still using the rental car service to go to the office every day. He freaked out, and I had to introduce him to my mechanic because he needed to meet face-to-face the person who was going to "operate" on his car. He still wasn't happy.

After that, we came back to the office, I saw him laughing exaggeratedly and leaning over the arm of an assistant at lunch right under my eyes. Tendrils of jealousy snaked their way through my body, and Bez growled like a caged animal lost in overwhelming possessiveness. I tightened my grip on the pen in my hand and held until it bit into my palm, incapable of not watching Lori's every moronic, flirty move. I imagined butchering that assistant in too many ways to count. I know exactly what came over me, it was a dark, old feeling from deep within. A dangerous one.

I'd thought Lori was my healthy obsession, more like an incurable disease.

I called him into my office, pushed him face down on my desk, and gave him only enough prep to let him feel the sting of my cock when I slid inside him like I belonged there. Bez crushed him under our big body and started battering him against the desk, groaning like a beast. My merciless thrusts were turning him inside out, claiming him as mine. He kept screaming while clawing at my thighs and biting at my forearm. Bez kept calling Lori his fuck toy and cum bucket, our whore and he moaned, loving every single second of this filthy, angry fucking. He'd suddenly convulsed under me,

whimpering so fucking sexily. While aftershocks were still running over him, I felt my cock swelling, heat spreading inside me. He shivered against me, and Bez pushed his dick deeper, making his eyes roll back as he ground down on his ass.

Then my body turned rigid, and my cock exploded. My mouth sucked and bit Lori's nape hungrily, no doubt leaving another bruise. I groaned, pumping him full of my cum. Bez reminded him he was fucking ours. He laughed and moaned once again.

We went for another round, Bez and I still switching one moment to another. It had never happened before. Lori was the first guy we ever actually shared. It was a new development.

When we were done, I was still angry at him. Blinded by my jealousy.

All my muscles ached, and as I slipped out of him, we started arguing heatedly about a possible client. He stated that the plaintiff had a good cause of action in negligence, I disagreed since the evidence was insufficient, therefore the claim was unsupported. Only a judge could resolve the dispute, and I knew a retired one who could easily do that. But Lori needed to learn that I'm not someone you want to cross.

"If you lose, you'll be my temp assistant until my PA comes back," I threw out the challenge.

"I'm a paralegal, not a bloody PA," he retorted, annoyance filling his voice.

"Is the work too easy for you? Are PAs not as good as paralegals?"

"Stop lawyer-ing me, you prickly, verbal-sparring, closed-off piece of marble!"

"Marble?"

"Your skin reminds me of the white counter in the kitchen apartment...not important." He waved his hands madly in the air. "And if I win? What do I get?"

"I'll give you one month to study full-time while still paying you."

The pout on his lips let me know he was pondering my proposal. “Two months and I’ll also sleep in your bed every night,” he added. His counter proposal surprised me. He already did that most nights, and I thought he preferred to have his privacy sometimes.

Told you, Bez grumbled.

I’d won. The case needed more evidence, which meant that Lori became my assistant.

“Can you do it? Be my PA?” I asked him.

“I shall do my best, boss,” he replied with an evil smirk and an even more devilish look.

Three days have passed, and Lori runs my office—and my life—like clockwork with so much efficiency and precision, I pretty much let him do anything he wants. Including being extra snarky with me.

When I tell him to bring me a coffee, he starts answering the phone with “Gabriel Slaver Reed’s office, how can I help?” He can’t cook for his life, but his coffee is creamy and slightly sweet—incredibly perfect—and he makes it only when he feels like it.

The cream is probably his spit, Bez jokes. But he might be right.

Lori also only uses my office’s private bathroom, stating that the floor restroom is for Brad Pitts while mine is the George Clooney of toilets—whatever that means.

He refuses to sit at the PA desk outside my office or to answer the phone unless it is someone worth it—the calls were redirected to the floor receptionist. I let it all slide because he straightened my messy calendar out for the next month and confirmed all my appointments for the next three weeks.

On top of that, in a no-nonsense manner that didn’t leave any room for argument, he added more benefits to his contract and gave himself a raise since he’s still doing his paralegal job. He calls me out on any of my, what he deems, *icy bullocks*. I’ve gotten used to his less-than-professional office attire, his ever-changing nail colors, and the way he enters my office

without knocking, swinging those narrow hips in high heels and taking a little jump to sit on the corner of my desk, flattening my files with his rear.

Lucky files, Bez grumbles.

I shake myself out of my thoughts, and after putting on a blue three-piece suit with a light gray shirt, I move to the living room, suddenly halting my steps. I only glance quickly at Wednesday on her roosting bars and around the room—that now features throw pillows, vanilla candles, a line of succulents, small, tall, round and squared mirrors, some framed photographs, and a large soft rug just in front of the fireplace where Lori told me in detail what he wants me to do to him. My eyes are caught by Lori's sinuous movements as he does yoga.

This is something I hope will never get old. Because seeing him contort and stretch his body so fluidly inflames my groin from zero to sixty.

He's wearing a white sports bra with my black boxer briefs. His curls are tied up in an odiously tight bun, his nails are water green—he changes the color often since he hates to see it chipped—and his face has no trace of makeup.

His dick bounces in my too-loose briefs as he changes position. He has a small triangle tattoo on his hip, a show of loyalty to Sully and Ollie's friendship, and two moles on his lower back that I like to brush my fingers over when I spoon him.

His striking, sharp, brown eyes flicker to mine, and my blood heats as my cock thickens and my heartbeat speeds up.

“Your fascination with wearing my underwear, is it a kink or a sign of kleptomania?”

He goes down on his hands, pushing his butt out and putting his head between his open legs, sending me a sultry look. His mercurial eyes change from light to dark. My cock is in a state of constant, throbbing pain because of him. Which is incredible since I didn't need much sex before I met him.

“Perhaps a klepto kink,” he jokes.

“Do you always wear other people's clothes?” I ask.

“Only yours, Gabe.” He winks. I feel a tendril of satisfaction at his response. I fucking like how he can easily distinguish between me and Bez. “I know you secretly dig it,” he adds.

I do, so much that I have to force myself not to look at his rear, with Bez sniffing at my bullheadedness.

“Tell your little thief to stay away from my stuff, though.” I send a glance at Wednesday.

“If *she* is a klepto, she can’t help herself,” Lori states, going flat on the rug with a snakelike move.

“How do you know if she is?”

“You could ask her.” Such a Lori reply. I don’t like his pet very much. I don’t hate her either, even though she ruined two pillows, left scratches on my wooden floor, and made a hole in the wall.

He straightens, using the small towel on the sofa over his lightly sweaty neck and chest.

“Any news on Bailey or the drugs?” Lori suddenly asks.

“Rami and Hunter are working on a new angle.”

“What angle?” He walks barefoot, cutely on his tiptoes, to the table to grab a bottle of water. His Adam’s apple bobs every time he swallows, and if I didn’t have somewhere to be, I’d give him something I know he enjoys sucking and choking on.

“Nothing concrete yet,” I reply, pushing the sexy images away for now. Lori switched my sex drive to the highest gear, and now I find myself thinking about his stretched lips or loud moans even during a work conference or a phone call with my brothers.

Bez laughs at my expense.

“Choo choo! I need to get on the murder train, or I won’t be responsible for my foul mood,” he hisses.

“More than usual?” I taunt him, pulling the hair tie and letting his curls fall down.

Stunning. It’s incredible how much beauty he naturally possesses.

He narrows his eyes but doesn’t push me away. He never does. He accepts me, criticizes me, mocks me, even laughs at me. Working with him has been a real challenge at times, we have very different approaches. Lori is passionate about what he does, he gives his soul to each case, cares about the clients, gets to know them, gives them a shoulder to cry on.

My unbiased and dispassionate methods clash with his, but I’ve found out that seeing the other’s perspective helps us to get things done. Unless Lori starts cussing at me and Bez takes over. He still screams, but that kind I encourage.

I can usually feel a barely contained vibrancy inside of him, but when he finds a way to win a case, his eyes for a few seconds are filled with so much emotion, it explodes out of him, spreading all around. I...like it.

You? The emotional crusher? Bez sounds incredulous.

You mean emotion?

Shut it, my alter replies.

“Hey! Am I missing some inner conversation between you two? Should I be jealous?” Lori’s voice penetrates my thoughts, and I find his eyes sparkling with curiosity and a bit of irritation.

“Never.” I brush my thumb over his lips. That soft dip, that beauty mole are my Achilles’ heel. I give it a small kiss as his succulent scent envelops me.

“I’ll let you know about Bailey.”

He snorts. “Right. It’s cute how you think I’ll just sit quietly in the kitchen like a depressed fifties housewife.”

“You can’t cook for your life unless it’s a salad.” I brush his cheek. The feel of his skin against mine soothes me, anchors me more and more to him.

“You say potatoes, I say vodka. I want in! I won’t let it go, like a rat after his trash. Who’s this bloke? Keyser Soze?”

“Hardly. Rami is being more careful than usual because of Phoenix. He doesn’t want to play their game again. We’re being smart.”

He huffs, mumbling something under his breath. I quirk a brow at him, and his pouting lips morph into a smirk.

“We’re watching the Usual Suspects tonight. Let me get changed.”

He said *we*. My mouth twitches once again, but my next words make him frown. “I need to go.”

He takes a step back, and starting walking backward, he asks, “Where are you going?”

“Base.” I follow him, entering inside the bathroom.

“Aren’t you aware of basic etiquette?” He makes a wide arm movement, showing me the room around us.

“I’ve seen you naked multiple times, I know you inside and out.” I almost growl. To cover it, I add a taunting, “Are you turning into a prude now?”

Those puckering lips need to be bitten and sucked.

“Suit yourself.” He pulls off the sports bra, revealing his pink, pointy nipples. Then giving me his back, he starts pushing down my boxer briefs... slowly, swinging his hips.

My dick is straining in my pants. I can see the upper curve of his perfect buns, round and luscious. A slight hint of peach fuzz covering his cheeks that I want to see bouncing while impaled on my cock. My hands itch to palm and squeeze.

My name tattooed on that tight ass would look fucking awesome, Bez grunts.

You sound like a frat boy, I retort. Not liking the idea one bit.

Lori bends lower, and I get a quick peek of the pink ring of his asshole. It looks red and a bit swollen from this morning’s shower sex. Possessiveness

hits me hard in the chest, and I want to taste that intimate part of him again, to thrust into that tight, perfect heat.

He turns, completely naked, dick half hard, my boxers hanging from his finger, a smirk plastered on his face, and challenge filling his eyes.

His devil-may-care attitude, self-confidence, and complete acceptance of himself is hot as hell. Those caramel curls and his big brown doll eyes, plump lips, perfect velvety skin, and compact body. He is exquisite. Bewitching. Irresistible.

My phone beeps in my vest pocket, reminding me that I have to go. I slide the cell out and check the text from Meg.

His Adam's apple bobs. "Can I come?" There's a trace of uneasiness in his voice, like it cost him to ask me. I know he's eager to eradicate evil. Next time, I'll take him with me. But not tonight. He'll be fine here alone, even though we haven't been apart long since he moved in here.

The realization leaves me dumbstruck.

"Gabe?" I can hear worry in his tone. It's astonishing how attuned he has become to me. Nobody can read me. Not even Meg at times. I like the fact that Lori can. I like him. How can I not like something that I consider mine?

Mine. My obsession has reached its peak.

Now I understand my brothers' primal need to stay near their partners, to never let them go too far. I feel the same toward Lori. Have to physically tear myself away from him most of the time.

I shake my head and back up. I can tell it's taking him a lot to let me. That he wants to reach for me, but he won't, because he respects my space when I really need it.

"Want you in my bed when I come back, naked and prepped."

He looks at me with fire in his eyes. "Yes, boss," he bites out, but I know the real meaning behind his words.

A "*fuck you*" for sure, Bez says.

No, a “sod off.”

His rear jiggles with every step he takes to the shower.

If his compliance is fake, I need to be sure he doesn’t stalk me again.

I send a text back to Meg telling her I’m on my way, and then fire one to Rami asking him to let me know if Lori moves. I know my brother is busy, but Serena can do it, and I need to know that Lori is safe while I go talk to Meg.

I hear Lori mumbling something as he enters the shower stall.

“Are you talking to yourself?” I ask, unable to leave him like this.

“Of course, I talk to myself. I need expert advice. Just like you do.” He sends me a glare. Is he implying that I should listen to him more? Or Bez?

Me, Bez states.

I stalk to him, every step unrushed and deliberate. Until I cross over into his personal space without hesitation, halting with my hand on the shower door that he tries to shut in my face.

The sexual tension burns between us, crackling and sizzling in the air. His rapid breaths make my blood heat, and all I want to do is take and take. Take him.

I drag a blatantly proprietary gaze over his face, cataloging each feature and filing them in my memory. He looks entranced. I lower my head as he lifts his. It feels like a powerful force is inescapably pulling us toward each other. Our lips press together, his warmth floods from his mouth to blanket my entire body. I pull him closer, wrapping an arm around him, and swipe my tongue over the soft dip in the middle of his lower lip.

I need his taste like I need oxygen to live.

He nips my tongue before opening up for me, and I dive in. So damn perfect. I want to taste myself inside his mouth, but I like it better when it’s all Lori. I grab his nape and move his head until I find a better angle as our tongues tangle together with passion and force. He attempts to dominate me as usual, but I bite his lip hard, enjoying his moan. And just as he gives in, I

suck on it and break the kiss. My hand lifts to tousle his hair. His curls slips softly between my fingers.

With my lips on his forehead, I order him, “Don’t go out.” I point at the condensation blotting out the window because of the vicious storm raging outside. Then I let him go and leave the bathroom and the apartment.

I clench my fingers tightly as I try to keep the sensation of his silky locks on my palm.



“Gabriel,” Ferdinand, the butler greets me in the entrance. He’s been a steadfast figure in this house since I was a kid. I can see the time passing in the wrinkles around his eyes and the bald spot on his head. “The missuses are waiting for you in the first-floor office. Should I bring a coffee?”

“No, I won’t stay long. Thank you, Ferdinand.”

“Very well.” He bows again before closing the door behind me.

I make my way through the foyer and pass the many closed doors, turning right in the corridor that will take me to Meg’s office. It’s raining too hard to see a clear view of the back garden from the many windows on my left. The leather soles of my shoes sound squeaky on the waxed floors, and the marble columns look shiny under the artificial lights.

Meg’s door is ajar, and I can hear Uri’s heated voice from inside. “I’ve been looking for years, fucking years, and now I discover that you actually saw him.” *“Him?”*

“I’ve been looking as well as you, traveling all around,” Linda replies, using a cool tone. “*He* came to me and then disappeared again.”

“He doesn’t want to be found, Uri,” I hear Meg’s psychiatric point of view. “Give him time.”

After a few seconds, Uri asks, “What did he tell you?” He sounds calmer but still threatening.

“The first time, he was waiting for me in my hotel room in New York. He told me Phoenix is dangerous and to be careful, before jumping out the window of the sixtieth floor like a damn bird. Yesterday, he appeared outside the house gates.”

“Serena mistook him for you, Uri.” Rami’s statement is even more confusing. Who are they talking about?

“We should tell your brothers. They deserve to know.” Meg sighs.

“He asked about you, Uri,” I hear Linda say after a moment.

The heavy silence that follows confirms how serious this conversation is. I shouldn’t keep eavesdropping. I push the door open and make my presence known.

My foster mothers are sitting on a sofa, looking like day and night. Meg with her black and white hair tied tightly at her neck, big glasses covering her dark gaze and the shadows underneath. And Linda with her blue doe eyes, freckles on her pale skin, and straight, loose blonde hair.

Uri is standing near the blue fireplace, wearing jeans and a green sweater. I think I saw his clothes on a model in some fashion magazine a few days back. Rami is lying down on the other sofa, hands behind his head, a tight t-shirt showing his huge pecs, and the jeans he wears are tearing at the seams on his trunk legs.

“Gabriel.” Meg gives me her warm smile. She’s lost more weight. Her lupus seems to have gotten worse even though she always tells us she’s fine. I’m sure Rami checked with her doctor. I need to talk to him about it.

Linda stands up to slap me on the back. “Like your sexy beard. Does it have anything to do with a certain twinky delight?”

Lori does like how my stubble scratches his skin when I feast on him.

“My balls are shriveling. How do you do it with a gremlin? Are you even biologically compatible?” Rami jokes. I push his feet off the armrest, forcing him to move while taking the seat next to him.

“You are a game designer, use your unstoppable imagination,” I tell him.

“Thank you, Siri,” he retorts with a gag. His robot, AI jokes are getting old. I ignore him, answering a work text instead.

“Fuck, you’re boring. Maybe I should reevaluate Mr. Hyde. Let him come out, or do I need to poke you with a stick to see Bez?”

I can take over whenever the fuck I want, Bez sniffs. *Why does everybody assume you’re the strong one?*

“You did that when we were teens already,” Uri interjects in a flat tone. “The black eye on your face made you slightly interesting back then.”

Rami raises his middle finger in the air, but Uri has turned toward the fireplace already.

“I remember that day.” Linda smirks. “Bez was really pissed off.”

“Ramiel, Uriel, can you leave us alone?” Meg suddenly asks my brothers.

“Why? Do you have more secrets to finally reveal?” Uri spits out. Whoever they were talking about affected him deeply.

“More like feelings and shit?” Rami suggests.

“Feelings? With Gabe? He’s an emotional dumpster fire,” Uri, the sociopath states.

Rami nods in agreement. “You’re emotionally constipated, need to open up. Like a flower, and not the carnivorous ones that swallow whatever crawls on them.”

“Ramiel, out! Uriel, there’s more to discuss,” Meg tells them.

“I have a donor to torture,” Uri says on his way out without looking at her. “Gabe, I’ll wait for you in the base.”

I nod, but he’s already gone. It’s my turn to help him dispatch the corpse. It’s been a few days since I killed, and my skin, now that I’m away from Lori, prickles with uneasiness again. It’s incredible how he affects me and soothes me. His mere presence, solely, does it.

Rami huffs, but stands up. “Tell Bez to fuck off.” The door closes behind him.

“What you were talking about before I arrived, is it related to all the times I helped you in the last few years?” I ask Linda. She came to me numerous times, asking me hypothetical legal questions or wanting favors from judges or the names of good lawyers in whatever city she was in.

“A few times,” she replies. I won’t pry. This is Uri’s issue. I know how hard it is to live with a secret pressing on my shoulders. So I simply nod.

“You asked to talk to us. Is there something wrong? How are you doing?” Meg asks me, taking off her glasses and placing them on the coffee table separating us.

“The prickling sensation is bearable, even though I haven’t killed in a week.”

“You should be on burning embers.” Linda is surprised since I need to kill quite often to stop the uneasiness.

“I’ve kept myself busy.”

“Do you feel that same aggravating sensation when you’re with Lori?” That’s why Meg is a renown forensic psychiatrist, she’s so perceptive and always knows where to look.

“No.”

“Gabriel,” she insists.

“I do when I can’t be around him, when I can’t touch him,” I confess. Linda smirks at me, I can see multiple dirty comebacks in her eyes, but she remains silent.

“Does he keep you at a distance? Stop you?”

“Never,” I answer Meg.

She nods and smiles. “Good. It was time you two got together.”

I raise my brow at her.

“Come on. We could all see the sparks of lust between you two.” Linda snorts.

“That was hate on his part and puzzlement on mine,” I clarify.

“Linda annoyed me when we first met.” Meg grabs her wife’s hand. “And she couldn’t stand me.” Linda kisses Meg’s head.

“Love and hate. Thin line.” Linda winks.

I don’t know if they’re right. But one thing is certain: Lori caught my attention from day one.

“How’s Bezaliel? Does he want to talk?” Meg asks.

Meg named us all after the Angels of Wrath, and when she found out about my alter, she gave him a name too, Bezaliel, the Angel of Shadow, living in the dark protected by God. She thought it was fitting, and Bez loved it.

Fuck no, no talking, is his rude answer to Meg’s question, which I relate with a shake of my head.

“That’s too bad. The troglodyte is fun.” Of course, Linda likes him, she’s a bloodthirsty, violence-lover. “He’s the other side of you, and I miss him when he disappears for a long time.”

Bez lets out a little grunt that makes Linda’s lips curl. “I love you too, Bez.”

“Does he come out?” It has been a long time since I’ve had therapy with Meg. I forgot how persistent she is.

“He does. Since I met Lori, he takes over more frequently. Should I be worried?”

“Does it bother you?”

“At first. He lets me out when I ask, so we are fine. He’s...sharing.”

Duh! You never wanted to share before, Bez huffs at me.

You wouldn’t have.

I would, he insists. *Maybe not. Who gives a fuck.*

“What does Bezaliel want?” Linda interjects.

“Little Wasp,” Bez growls. Hearing him Meg blinks, while Linda’s lips part.

“He wants Lori,” I explain.

“Fuck!” Linda looks at me in awe. She’s never seen my multiplicity like a condition, more like a superpower. She’s crazy like that, and one of the most accepting people I’ve ever met. With Lori. I still can’t wrap my head around the fact that he didn’t bat an eye at my multiplicity. On the contrary, he enjoys it.

“Heard you loud and clear, Bez,” Meg announces. “The question is, do you want Lori as well, Gabe?”

“Yes,” I admit.

“And does he want you boys?” Linda narrows her eyes at me, ready to strike Lori down if that’s not the case.

My mouth twitches. “He reminds me of you a lot. Fighting tooth and nail, always scheming, so confident in his own skin.”

“Right?” Meg says. “I told her the same when we met him.”

“He’s ready to be part of the family business,” I tell them. “He even made a torture record book.”

“Yea, that’s pretty ingenious. Just keep that notebook locked somewhere safe, even though it is all in codes,” Linda says. “Okay. I’ll call him. I think he’s ready for his one-on-one lessons. We can start next month,” Linda declares with an eager tone.

“God help us all,” I deadpan, because it doesn’t seem wise to leave them alone together.

“Gabriel,” Meg calls my name. “Do you remember when you used to hurt yourself, recreating some of the tortures you suffered to help you control yourself?” Strong lights, cold showers, and loud noises were what I used when I was thirteen.

Fun times, Bez says sarcastically.

“You wanted to get rid of Bez. You thought he was the reason why your mother was dead. That you were the reason since your mind created your alter. You wanted him to stop taking over. You were afraid he’d be, that you’d be the cause of someone else’s death. Someone close to you.”

Why is she digging up old stuff? I’d rather keep it in the past where it belongs.

“You didn’t do it though. Didn’t want to kill that part of yourself. Finally, you accepted it. Bez,” Meg continues. “You’ve made such progress. Confronting was an amazing achievement. You have such an inner force. Just as firm a control on your emotions. Now that you’re with Lori, I think you’re letting go of that control, letting yourself go, letting yourself feel, and Bez likes that. That’s why he’s compromising with you and taking over more.”

Is it? I do let go of my control when I’m with Lori. It doesn’t seem so important anymore.

“What did I always tell you? Embrace yourself and be true to your own choices.”

For fuck sake, are we done with this shrink crap? Bez mutters.

“You chose Lori. Both of you. A throuple. I support it fully, boys!” Linda makes a weird face that I can’t decipher, while Meg very unprofessionally rolls her eyes. But Linda does make her loosen up and smile like no one else can.

Does Lori do the same for me?

A while later, I’m entering the garage through the entrance attached to the house. Serena lets me know that Lori is still at home, and I want to get this donor thing over with to get back to him.

I kind of like your bro’s level of ruthlessness with a donor, we can enjoy it before going back to our Little Wasp, Bez says.

You just want to be sure Lori will be asleep, so you can wake him up with your dick.

Two things I will enjoy.

Uri suddenly slides out from under his Hummer.

“Problems with your car?” I ask.

“Fucking Raph found the knife I took from him, and stole my spare tire.”

I’d suggest to just get another spare tire, but this stupid game of hiding each other’s stuff until the other finds it has been going on for years now, and nothing will ever stop them.

“I’ve got those contracts for your new restaurant ready—” I start telling him, but he cuts me off.

“Why do you keep him locked up? Bez. He doesn’t go on rampages or fuck anything that moves unless it’s Lori. So, why?” He’s playing with his tongue piercing, rolling it over his lower lip.

My brothers have never asked me about my multiplicity. We don’t talk about our *issues* among us. We have Meg or Linda for that. His sudden interest is odd. He doesn’t really care since he’s a sociopath. It must be curiosity.

“I can’t lock him up. He’s stronger and unpredictable.”

“Isn’t unpredictability a big part of our lives? We cannot control everything. I wish we fucking could.” Pretty sure he’s thinking about Sari and his new combative response to him.

“You need to get *stabby* and relax a bit, bro,” he adds.

That I do, but I can clearly see the tension in his shoulders.

“You’ve met hundreds of annoying people. Why are you obsessed with Lori’s particular brand?” Uri then asks me.

“Why are you so obsessed with Sari?” I flip the question on him.

“Why aren’t you?”

“You want me to be?”

“Are you?” He’s using an uninterested tone with a hint of murder.

“Really? Bez is so uninterested in this conversation that he’s humming a fucking song.”

“And you, Gabe?”

“I’m taken,” I confess to stop this nonsense.

“Ah! I’m impressed by your honesty. So much that I’ll let you stab the shithead a couple of times. I need a drink while you do it.”

“We must still have a bottle of tequila in the fridge,” I tell him, as he places his palm on the wall scanner. Serena welcomes him and the wall magically slides open, revealing the descending metal stairwell to the base.



When I get home three hours later, Lori doesn’t welcome me from the sofa where he’s usually reading or watching TV, nor from the kitchen making one of his salads. I like to see him barefoot in a comfy, baggy t-shirt, looking all snuggly when I open the door. He never fails to send me a smile or a flirty look. His glares make me want to fuck him until he screams my name and then cuddle him until he falls asleep.

What the fuck have you become, man? Bez mocks me.

Something in me calms knowing Lori is somewhere in my home, safe.

I walk to my bedroom and feel pleased when I can see the outline of his body under the sheets. He really followed my order.

I take off my clothes and slide in front of him. Bez is oddly still, not pushing me down to take what he wants. He’s compromising, just like Meg said.

Lori is wearing one of my jackets again. He usually puts on the one I used the day before because it’s covered in my scent. Whenever I come back home and find him dressed only in it, I know he needs me, that he needs to be fucked, to feel me close to him. All around him. So I haul him over my

shoulder and pin him in the shower, letting him wrap his whole body around me while I take what's mine under the cascading water.

I decide to bathe in his dainty form for a minute. Shadows and lights interplay on each curve, angle, and edge, making him look almost ethereal. Exquisite. The lily scent. Those high cheeks. The upturned nose. I could drown in him.

His lips suddenly part, and he shifts, sliding closer to me until his palms flatten on my pecs like blazing coals. He nuzzles my neck, moaning in bliss after he takes a long inhale. Christ, how did my feelings change this fast? From wariness and curiosity, to fixation and craving. To obsession and possessiveness.

His tongue suddenly forms a wet, warm circle on my neck, and I can't resist him anymore.

My hands glide down his back, reaching his already slick, prepped hole, and with a smooth buck of my hips I thrust inside him.

He feels simply and utterly mine. Ours.

Bez and I make an inner promise that we'll do anything in our power to keep him with us, just before we lose ourself to him once again.

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LORI



Another five days passes. And nothing on the revenge front. My murderous urges haven't disappeared, they need an outlet. I need to get even somehow. I can't wait patiently at home near the phone. That's unthinkable. Absurd. Murder-inducing.

So in the afternoon after work, instead of going home and study I instruct Arnold to take me to Rami and Hunter's house to see Dare.

While waiting at a red light in the back seats my eyes focus on that damn bloke wearing a white mask again. He is leaning against a wall in a narrow alleyway entrance. Same gray hoodie, broad shoulders, and tense stance. The white mask covers his whole face leaving only two small narrow holes for his eyes. But he's always too far to discern the color. It looks like he's staring at a restaurant. Isn't it one of Uri's? He owns a buttload of them, hard to remember every single one.

When I look back the bloke has pulled a Houdini again and disappeared. Who is he? Is he real? I might be in need of a psychiatrist, not an eye doctor. Meg will hear from me soon.

When I arrive at Dare's—kind of a farm in the suburbs—he's alone. His brothers are both at work, and Rami and Hunter at the pet shelter. Fred, his blind squirrel is wrapped around his neck, like a scarf, taking a nap.

"What do you need?" I like how to the point he always is.

“I want to cyber kill a maggot,” I respond with the same directness as I grab a juice from the kitchen fridge.

He doesn't even blink at my odd request. “You want me to falsify a death certificate?”

“Not only that.” I smile at him with excitement. “We'll give him the nastiest death ever, then a cheap funeral, write a last will and testament leaving everything to charities and pet shelters.”

He whistles. “They really pissed you off.”

“Philip Bailey has to die.” The fact that I can remember his name says it all. I follow him into his room and drop myself on his humongous bed. In the last two months, Dare got even taller and bigger. When will he stop growing?

He sits at his desk in front of two screens and starts tapping on his keyboard. “Rami already cleaned out Bailey's offshore accounts, and Serena will let us know if he tries to withdraw money from any other bank in the US.”

Dare isn't part of the family side business, but he has ears, and Rami is not very careful around the triplets.

“Don't care. I can't kill the fucker in reality, so I need to do it Matrix style, or I'll go on a rampage.” I notice Ren's snake wrapped around the ceiling light as I look to the heavens with exasperation. George is sweet but still a snake.

“Okay,” Dare agrees. “You're in luck. I hacked a morgue a week ago, I didn't close the back door, so I can enter their files again and add Bailey. How did the dude die?”

“Spontaneous combustion caused by too many jalapeños. No, I can do better.” I start pacing as I think. “Run over by a Zamboni. Not funny enough. Crushed under a piano. Lame.” I suddenly stop, snapping my fingers. “I got it! Tragic gardening accident involving a very long, thick zucchini, slippery olive oil and a pair of shears. The authorities thought it was best left unsolved.”

Dare snorts, but he quickly falsifies a police report. Rami has created his very own mini-me. Bugger, I want one, too.

Now that I think about it, I need to contact Spencer, the young bloke that used to live near my old building. He moved into one of the apartments above Ollie's library café a few days ago. We used to chat when we met in the neighborhood. He is a good mate who went through a long series of unlucky events. I gave him some errands to do in exchange for money and a place to crash after I discovered how grave his situation was. That didn't stop him from almost joining the Scorpion gang. I'm glad Rague and Ollie helped him out.

"I chose a very cheesy funeral home. Plastic flowers and a greedy owner. Same for the lawyer—one of those ambulance chasers. He does it for a price and keeps his mouth shut." Dare's voice takes me back to the present. "Philip Bailey has an illegitimate daughter, did you know that? He's never acknowledged her."

"Really?" I ask, dying to know more..

Dare goes back to making his fingers fly on the keyboard. "The little girl is four. Her mother is an ex-exotic dancer, now working two jobs to provide for the daughter."

"So let's leave most of it to her, another part to single mothers in need and the rest to pet shelters." I change my plan slightly.

"Does Rami know about this?" Dare asks only now.

"Nope. The Angels of *Crap* are on my fuck-off list at the moment. Overprotective idiots!" I mumble the last words. "Hunter Bear does, though." I have his approval—sort of.

Dare seems satisfied by my reply. "So Bailey, after a deadly encounter with a zucchini, leaves most to his daughter?"

"Precisely. Now let's add more embarrassingly specific details to that death certificate." I smirk evilly, leaning toward the screens.



The days keep passing by and Gabe, Bez and I are still alive. The cohabitation isn't a smooth one, but we've managed not to kill each other.

I fall asleep every night with my body wrapped in a stranglehold around Gabe, my face in his neck. His skin slick with sweat tastes salty. He always traces my spine or hips with his fingers, depending on our position in bed. I'd melt into the mattress if I hadn't already been rammed into it. I've never been so thoroughly fucked, in every sense possible.

How many times have I performed this dance? The physical encounter followed by the side-stepping of any emotional entanglement? And yet, this time I can't stop myself from stumbling, slipping, and falling. I don't want to extricate myself in any way. Why would I?

At night they wake me while worshipping my body in every position possible—didn't know I'd be so much into somnophilia, but bloody hell sign me up for it. Bez tells me how much he likes my devious mind and mischievous ways, while Gabe looks at me with such searing desire, I could naturally combust.

The multiplicity should have scared me. Instead, it works perfectly. I always knew one man wouldn't do it for me, two seemed too much work. Gabe and Bez, though, are the perfect fit.

Two men in one.

They keep me on my toes, never knowing who I'll be facing. The bantering among us is irritating and so blistering hot it always ends with my hole filled to the brink.

Somewhere in the back of my mind, I know this isn't me, is it? It can't be me, this submissive, desperate creature helpless to do anything, but eagerly take their cock. Even exhausted or furious, part of me wants to climb on top of them and take it until that hollow ache inside me stops hurting. Have I lost control over my body and my mind if I want to lie on top of them, to

feel their heat and powerful body under and around me, to close my eyes and drift in peaceful dreams surrounded by their scent?

It's not only the daily phenomenal sex I'm getting, though. I love spending time with them. We are constantly together, working together, going for a bite together, watching movies, listening to rock music—well with Bez, Gabe hates it.

I like this life. I'm never bored with them. I even like Gabe's light snores at night. It's a rare occurrence to see him sleeping at all, his insomnia doesn't allow him much time for that. So it fills me with happiness when it happens. On some level it's like he trusts me enough to let go and rest in my arms.

I also love to be the only one to know those small idiosyncrasies of theirs. Like the fact that Gabe brushes his hair always with even strokes, or Bez never adds salt to his food before trying it and gets super annoyed when a commercial comes on TV, or how Gabe would spend hours in his knife room—the door near is bedroom—polishing his blades and tossing them at his man-shaped target.

I feel lighter since I moved in with them—can't believe that from a horrible thing like being dosed, this happened.

Besotted is what I am, and the feeling grows each day. When I hear Bez talking softly to Wednesday, when I fall asleep on the sofa with my cheek resting on Gabe's strong thigh and his long fingers carding through my hair, stroking my neck, tracing my lips, when I wake up to the sight of them emerging from the bathroom all wet and fresh, hard abdominal muscles on display with that delicious light trail that disappears inside the small towel around their hips, hiding the best part of them from my gaze until it falls on the ground and they walk to the closet with their soft but still impressive dick hanging between their legs, balls swinging.

They surprised me grandly when I received Sully's frantic call yesterday; he was having a panic attack. Rague and Ollie were busy with a donor while Brad had gone out to get something to eat and wasn't picking up his phone. I jumped out of bed, ready to drive my supermini barracuda when Bez started getting dressed too.

“Wherever you go, I go,” he simply stated, and down the besotted hole I went. I slid even further when I witnessed the tranquility Gabe transmitted to Sully. The patience and understanding he showed to the frightened boy. When that didn’t work, Bez came out, calling Pink a rotten cat.

“Is she a survivor of the nuclear bomb?” he snorted.

A glowering Sully found his fighting spirit again as he told him off. I noticed the twitch on Gabe’s lips at his answer. They did it on purpose to make the boy react. To make him forget about his fears. They left me in awe of them.

The besotted hole seems to have no bottom whatsoever.

Then Gabe has started wearing casual clothes—I say Gabe because Bez I’ve learned would go around butt naked if he could.

I discovered that low, gray sweatpants are the fuck-me-right-here-right-now garment of choice. They are also a concussion risk since I seem to trip over my feet every time he wears nothing but those sweats. They perfectly outline the thick shape of his delicious dick, riding low on the V pointing right in its direction with blond hair peeking out of the waistband, leaving his long, defined chest on display. Without exception, my mouth pops open every time he walks in like that.

Even in a white cotton, knit-ribbed muscle shirt showing his bulging biceps, low-rise jeans wrapped around his muscular butt—he can fill them like a dream—brown dress leather ankle boots, and a sexy, navy beanie covering his blond hair, he’s just...too much. I might need to invest in a smelly salt company.

I do like Gabe wearing his tailored, three-piece suits as well, though. They make me purr with lust. At the firm, he tries to be all professional, but I can see how much he forces himself at times, his eyes gleaming as he glances at me while in a meeting, talking to clients or colleagues. His hand seems to always find its way to my thigh under the table, sending a jolt up my body, but he does it slowly, as if he is reluctant to touch me but can’t help himself.

Does he feel the same inexorable pull that draws me to him? The same tingle that rapidly travels down my torso and halts in the pit of my

stomach?

Gabe's hard gaze says no funny business, but when he calls me to his office, his voice over the phone is raspy and sounds like sex. I look forward to our private...fights, to his hand set across my throat without hampering my breath, his thumb on my chin tilting it up, forcing me to open my lips as he pushes closer until all I perceive is him—and my body hyperventilating.

Today, though, our fight didn't end up the usual way—with me pinned on a flat surface, filled with his dick. He had just come back home when he received a call from Rami. I know it was him because I heard his voice through the phone. Gabe told me to start eating the dinner I bought from his favorite Greek restaurant.

When I asked him where he was going, he just replied, "Stay," as he grabbed his keys.

"Not your dog, Gabriel," I full-named him.

"No, but you scream when I fuck you doggie style." Bez smirked at me smugly. He's such an egotistical, overgrown, conceited prick at times.

"How about I bite your balls off, dog style?"

"Kinky, Little Wasp. But we do love your teeth on us." He's crouched to pet Wednesday. It's baffling how Bez loves my hen while Gabe barely acknowledges her.

"I know that!" I retort. "Still want to tear you a new one if you keep me out of this. The 'where you go, I go' is only one-sided then."

His eyes darken as Gabe takes over again. They switch quite often when we are at home or fucking. I can recognize the small signs now. "Stay here. I won't leave you out of the fun."

Arrogant, bumptious, bigheaded, ridiculously handsome dick!

"Okay." I shove the bitter word out between gritted, cracking teeth.

His eyes bore a hole in my head, while his lips give an amused twitch—still no smile from Gabe. He seems to see through my fake submission and malicious compliance. But he still leaves.

I took the piss out of Ollie and Rague and their co-dependency numerous times. And now more than anything I want both Bez and Gabe to feel reluctance similar to mine when they let me go.

I stomp to the walk-in closet in the bedroom, dialing Sari's number. If my boyfriends don't want to share with me, I won't share with them.

Did I just refer to Gabe and Bez as my...*boyfriends*?

"Hey, Lori." Sari decides to pick up as my brain is trying to recover from the bloody massacre of my neurons. "Hello?"

"Angel, do you have access to weaponized smallpox? Cholera?" My eyes fall on the small Lady Dior bag I rented from the thrift store downtown three weeks ago. I have to return it soon. I'm kind of happy my time is up. It reminds me of Crimson, the pain, the embarrassment, and my arsehole boyfriends.

Boyfriends. Boyfriends, I mentally repeat it. It sounds right. The same boyfriends that gave me Prada and Chanel bags. Imagining strangling them while kissing them is a healthy mental exercise. Everybody knows that venting is good for the soul.

I slide my hand inside the bag to make sure I didn't leave anything inside when a piece of paper slides to the floor.

"Sorry, no cholera. But I might have some mad cow disease at the base," Sari replies to my crazy request. He's such a sweetie.

I pick up the paper, and my frown turns into a wicked smile. It's Crimson bartender's phone number, Caterpillar Brows. He gave it to me that night... before dosing me, the shitbag. Maybe he can lead us to Bailey, or I can just beat his nuts until they turn into a red goo. Blood red should represent tranquility, blue is an overrated color.

"Hold on a sec," I tell Sari, so I can text Caterpillar Brows. He answers straight away, and I know it's fate. "Angel, stop whatever you're doing. We are going on a special mission."

"Mission?" He sounds adorably confused.

“We’re going hunting tonight,” I declare, turning my eyes to my sexiest clothes in the closet.



I park a couple of blocks away from the bar. I’m wearing my tightest, shortest skirt, red with a sexy slit on the side, and a snappy, sparkly tank top loose on the front with a crisscross back. My get-lucky scarlet pumps are on my feet, and I feel hot and ready to use their heels to pierce some testicles. My curls are loose and shiny, my nails painted lucky emerald and my glittery ruby eyeshadow and maroon eyeliner are daring and absolutely spectacular.

“From here, we have a good view of the bar entrance,” I say with excitement as I tilt my head to look outside the car window. I shift back to check my red kiss lipstick in the flippy sun visor. My statement is met with silence, so I turn toward Clover and Sari, sitting respectively in the passenger and back seats.

Clover is gawking at me with distress in his eyes, while Sari is white as a ghost, still grabbing the oh-shit handle in a tight-knuckled grip, other hand pulling at his braid.

“What?” I ask them.

“You’re a...terrible driver,” Sari whispers.

“It’s the first time I’ve heard you insult someone, and that someone is me... Awwww.” I cover my mouth, feeling honored to be someone’s first.

“I saw my whole life shuffle before my eyes.” Clover glares at me now.

“Flash before your eyes, Clover-bell,” I correct him.

“I don’t care, Lori! You almost hit a pole while screaming at an old man.”

“He shouldn’t cross when the pedestrian light is flashing.” Especially if he needs a cane to walk.

“Drove on two wheels for two blocks.”

“That curve was tighter than I thought. I might have lost a couple of tire bolts out there.” My chuckle earns more glowers from Clover; Sari is still recovering. “You’re both overreacting,” I huff.

“Over... You ran two red lights and drove into oncoming traffic!” It’s weird to see Clover this agitated, he’s a very laid-back person. My driving brings out people’s hidden sides.

“I couldn’t see after that mental pigeon decided my supermini barracuda was the perfect target to bomb with turd. How a small bird can poop that much is disgustingly staggering.” I turn my eyes toward the white and brown mess on the windshield. “I tried to clean it off with the wipers, but it got worse. Now it’s smeared everywhere.” Washing it is going to be a bitch. I’ll need a hose, a limitless amount of water, and some acid. Maybe I should just change the whole windshield.

“I’ll find another way back home, which will not be in your car,” Clover announces with finality.

“I’m sure Superman can fly you there,” I joke. Ungrateful, scaredy cat.

“We did fly and float in the air at one point when you didn’t slow down over that downhill road,” he reminds me.

“Supermini barracuda is a powerhouse. I wanted to show you guys the roar of her engine,” I say with excitement.

“I could barely hear you over that roar,” he hisses.

“I heard each one of your screams, Clover-bell. And I think you left the imprint of your fingers on the car door. Gabe just fixed her. Be gentle.”

“Do you have a sickness bag?” Sari teases—I think.

“Wednesday had so much fun, didn’t you dear?” I look at her perched in her own seat.

“Why the hell did you bring her?” Clover stupidly asks.

“She was restless at home. She wanted to go out, duh.”

“I think she laid an egg.” Sari lets me know.

“I’ll have toast and a sunny-side up for breakfast tomorrow.” I push a fist up in the air in triumph.

“What’s the word you use? You’re daft as a bush!” Clover insults me before getting out of the car and slamming the door.

I lean on his seat until I reach the car window to look at him pacing. “I’m a plonker at times, can lose the plot, and be like a dog with two dicks. But I’m not daft, you tosser!”

“I didn’t understand a word—” He suddenly halts to stare at something on the left. “Isn’t that your stalker? Ronny something,” Clover asks me.

My eyes quickly laser focus on the two blokes talking outside a 7-Eleven a block away. Fuck me sideways, it’s Chimney—I could recognize those overly tight jeans and long dry hair anywhere. He’s clearly using his lame charm on someone. I haven’t seen him since the café, but I’ve never been alone after that. Gabe is always with me when I go out, and Arnold drives me around when he isn’t.

“I have some questions for him. We arrived early—”

“Due to your crazy driving,” Clover feels the need to say.

“I can spare some time. Care to help me?” I feel my evil smile curling my lips as I look from Clover to Sari.

“What do you have in mind?” Sari grabs the headrest of the passenger seat to move forward.

“Misdirection,” I whisper darkly, moving my eyes toward Wednesday.

Five minutes later, Sari and Clover are strolling down the street toward him, smiling and chitchatting. I’ve rounded the block and am walking out from the alley that emerges a few feet from the prick. He’s too busy cornering his prey near the wall to notice me. But the prey sees Wednesday. “What is that?” he screams like an idiot.

My lady hates high-pitched noises, and flapping her wings, she starts pecking their ankles. It’s always fun to see people trying to move away

from an angry hen, they do a little, uncoordinated, bouncy dance.

Adjusting my baseball bat on my shoulder, I swing it hard on Chimney's leg. He moans and falls on his knee as I snap my fingers. Wednesday stops her attack and moves away, looking for food on the dirty ground.

"You. Run," I tell the prey, moving my bat up and down. He doesn't let me say it twice and flees like he has the flame of hell burning his ass.

Chimney slides his hand under his jacket, and my grip tightens around the bat when I hear, "Hands behind your head, or I'll shoot." Sari's voice is stony as he reaches the bloke's back. We have no gun, he's bluffing while improvising—that's proper badass. Chimney doesn't know that and slowly raises his hands, glaring at me.

"We have so much to chat about..." Blimey, I can't remember Chimney's name. Maybe Ollie is right, I just don't fucking care about stupid details like names. "Why did you stalk me?"

He glares at me, his lips tighten.

"Answer him!" Sari's voice turns into an *oof* when Chimney pushes himself up and headbutts him in a pathetic attempt at escaping. I swing my bat again and land it on the side of the prick's knee, making him stumble. I twist the wooden handle in my hands and push it upward, hitting him under the chin, then I spin and mean-high-kick him right in the gut. He drops on the ground with a moan.

"Angel, are you okay?" I glance at Sari. He has a little blood on his lip, but he doesn't look upset. On the contrary his eyes are shining with...pleasure, and there's a satisfied expression on his face.

No time to open this can of...I don't even know if there would be worms in it or something utterly different.

"You were great, Angel. What did you use as a fake gun?"

"The lipstick you gave me." He smiles, showing me the Chanel Rogue Coco Gloss tube.

"Just superb," I add in a little French accent.

Clover turns Chimney on his belly with a hard push of his foot—the prick is a tall bloke, so third time is the charm—and yanks his hands back. He grabs his right wrist—his dominant hand, which Chimney used to smash my face in the underground garage—and twists it, hard. I hear a popping sound and, then another one. I muffle his scream, pushing his face against the cement ground.

“Bup-bup-bup-bup! Don’t bother my hen!” I grind his cheek harder on the dirty cement. “Nice moves,” I tell Clover.

He shrugs. Such a humble ninja.

“Get my wallet and scram, low lives,” he hisses. I saw the recognition in his eyes before. He knows very well who I am.

“Wednesday got it already.” I take it from her beak and go through it, tossing the contents one-by-one on the ground. How many strip joint’s business cards can a bloke keep? “Only one-hundred-dollar bills? Who are you, Willy Wonka?”

“Who?” Sari asks. I part my lips to explain, but decide to let it go. Sari needs more fun in his life. Much more fun.

“Ronny Salas,” I read on his driving license.

“It’s our guy,” Clover confirms.

I pat R—the prick’s jacket and find a knife and a cell phone. I leave the cell on the ground and keep a grip on the knife. I roll him over, bloody-face up—with Clover’s help—as he groans in pain. I crouch down and push the blade of the knife to his cheek—not grabbing his hair this time, because my nail polish is fucking fabulous and ruining it would be a Shakespearean tragedy.

“Now let’s try again. Why did you attack and stalk me?” I growl.

“Don’t know who you fucking are,” he moans.

“Talk,” Sari interjects. That domineering voice comes out again, and I almost let out a “yes, sir.”

“Fuck you!” Chimney doesn’t sound as equally impressed.

The tip of the blade digging slowly in his cheek makes him grunt and curse, but still no words.

We don't have much time so tough love it is.

I remove the bloody knife and lift Wednesday from the ground, while Clover sits on Chimney holding his good arm.

"My little lady here loves to peck at soft things, like worms and eyeballs." His eyes widen with shock. "She doesn't stop until she gets to all the gooey, juicy parts." I let the threat float in the air for a second. "Sari, be a dear and keep his eyes open for me. Hope you know where to buy a pirate eye patch."

"Don't you fucking come near me!" He twists and wiggles his body, trying to push Clover and Sari off him. His frightened gaze flickers from my smiling face to Wednesday's red eyes. "Stop! I said stop!"

I move my hen's beak closer, performing a perfect psycho-villain chuckle. "Talk!"

"Bart and Frederick Dorridge!" he yells the names of the two lawyers Gabe fired. "They paid me to roughen you up and then take you someplace." The maggots wanted to get their revenge on me.

"Where?" I push my stiletto heel right on his groin.

"I don't know," he cries. "I was supposed to get the location after I got you. But I never did because of that fucking guy in the suit who doesn't take his eyes off you for even one second."

"Seems like Gabe is *lassoed*," Clover jokes.

"You mean hooked, he's hooked," Sari tries.

"Why would I say that?" Clover makes a disgusted face. "That would hurt him."

I open my mouth, but my eyes are caught by the sight of a furious Uri walking forcefully toward us, eyes zeroed in on Sari. He stops in front of him, grabs his face, and then proceeds to suck his bloody lower lip inside

his mouth. Sari's eyes almost fall out of their sockets for how much they widen.

My mouth turns slack at the scene while Clover whistles suggestively. It lasts a few seconds, but bloody hell that was hotter than hot.

“Who did this to you?” Uri growls in Sari’s face.

“Him! Him!” I point at the bloke under Clover, who, seeing Uri’s enraged expression, visibly tries to make himself smaller.

“Let him go,” Uri hisses, dropping his hand from Sari’s face, his blazing eyes focused on R...R... Damn it. I don’t care what his name is, he’ll be dead anyway.

Clover takes a step back, letting Uri’s boot come down on Chimney’s nose first, breaking it, then his left hand. A bone-crushing sound mixed with his scream makes a couple of people turn our way, but Clover pulls out a badge from his messenger bag, stating that this is a police matter.

“Fake?” I ask from the corner of my mouth.

“No,” is his succinct response.

Wednesday is starting to fuss, so I lift her in my arms. She instantly calms down.

Uri has Chimney by the neck now, his face is painted with blood, eyes closed, mouth slack, The kidnapping van stops near us and Hunter and Rami get out.

“Only the antichrist could have come out from C-3PO and a gremlin.” Rami waves at Wednesday as Hunter opens the back door of the black van.

I flip him off. “I’ll sic her at you, Reacher.” I hear the thump Chimney’s body makes when it hits the metal inside the van.

“What are you doing here?” Sari asks Uri with his arms crossed over his chest. He looks...upset? Don’t know what’s with him tonight.

“That fucker came after you again. That’s why I told you to stay!” I hear Bez’s raspy voice first, then he jumps down from the van, wearing a pair of

worn jeans, black boots, a gray t-shirt that makes his eyes pop, and that sexy beanie.

“And I told you, I’m not a dog,” I retort, as he stops in front of me. His scent makes me relax instantaneously. “Did you follow me?”

“No. Serena did,” he says, without an ounce of shame.

“Don’t get all goblin-y on him. In his defense, Gabe has Serena on you every time you set a foot out of his apartment.” Rami smirks, happy to have gotten his brother in trouble.

“What the fuck! I thought I’ve been clear enough with you two, I don’t need a bloody knight. I can take care of myself.” I push on his chest. He’s lucky I have Wednesday and I don’t want to jostle her, otherwise, I’d have jumped on him and had him in a headlock in two seconds flat.

“I know,” Gabe replies, his condescending answer is getting old.

Self-assertive, patronizing, high and mighty, overbearing dick!

“No, you don’t!” I poke his pec now.

“Show them who’s the boss!” Rami cheers. *I’ll get him later.*

“What were you doing here?” It’s Bez again.

“I’ve never heard them switch like this.” Sari’s voice is filled with awe.

“If you think I’ll answer to your tosser coalition against me...” I start replying to Gabe and Bez, but Clover cuts me off, adding himself to tonight’s archenemy list.

“Lori almost killed us driving us here after he lured the bartender from Crimson with the pretense of a date. The stalker encounter was purely accidental.”

I can hear Gabe’s teeth cracking as his icy eyes turn to hellfire—Bez again—as they notice my sexy attire. “The fuuuuck!” he roars, but before he can grab me, I spin around and stomp my way to the bar.

Like they can tell me what to do and where to go. If I need to show them what I’m made of, I’ll bloody do it. Right the fuck now! I want to be part of

their family business, and I will. I always get what I want. Always!

The bar door suddenly bangs open, and out comes the bartender with his bushy eyebrows. “Hey, curly. I was looking for—” His words stop as his eyes fall on Wednesday screeching in my arms. Then they jump up to my face and stop on something behind me.

I hear a threatening growl. Bez. Fuck! It makes the bartender take a step back before he turns and runs to his car.

“Great! Look what you’ve done!” I scold him. The bartender jumps in his tiny car and turns on the engine when Hunter’s herculean body appears in front of the car. He raises his heavy booted foot and kicks the hood with his heel. A deafening bang resounds in the street followed by the pop of the airbag going off, hitting Caterpillar Brows gloriously in the face.

I’m frozen on the sidewalk. Stunned. “That was fucking brilliant!”

“That’s my grizzly!” Rami is clapping, running to his boyfriend. “You’ll get a reward for this,” he adds suggestively.

The bartender’s body is limp on top of the steering wheel.

“It’s not a reward if it’s already mine.” Hunter’s gruff voice is followed by the sound of a loud kiss.

“Tom Cruise has nothing on us!” Clover declares.

“He’ll have a major headache when he wakes up,” Sari comments, looking at the bartender with a scrunched-up expression.

“I’m hyped! Lori, you promised me a drink and a dance,” Clover reminds me.

“We need to interrogate him. Both of them,” Gabe says from behind me, his monotone voice has a slight angry hiss to it. I want to vent my fury so damn much. I’ve been looking forward to entering the FUNS room, but not like this. I want Gabe and Bez next to me as equals. To see *me* as an equal, not a frail thing that needs to be monitored.

Ahhhhh!

I'm still fuming at Clover for throwing me under the bus before, but I'm more enraged with Gabe and Bez and the way they join forces against me. "You do that, we'll go have fun, and if you arses try to stop me, I swear I'll move out." I look at Gabe straight in the eyes to let them both know I mean it.

Again, Bez's snarl comes out. I can almost see the inner fight my boys are having.

"You're my boyfriends, not my captors!" I tell them. I can see the exact moment the statement registers because Gabe's, or maybe Bez's, breath halts. I'm too furious to care.

I take advantage of it and jog toward my car—with a very upset Wednesday. My Adam's apple feels so big that I don't think I can actually talk around it.

"Fuck, no! Stop, Lori," I hear Clover. I turn with my hand on my car handle as he whistles, pushing his fingers inside his mouth, and a taxi magically stops a few feet from him.

"Sari, come on!" he calls him, who, without hesitation, walks toward us. As the taxi starts to move, I see Uri coming out of the van with an unhappy—and kind of scary—expression. Gabe is still where I left him. He'll take care of my car, or fuck, I'll come get it tomorrow.

I push down the window and move my head out to tell the bros, "Oh, the prick was paid by the Skid Mark brothers to kidnap me." Gabe's head snaps toward me. He opens his mouth, closes it again, and then clenches his fists, all the muscles in his arms bulging on either side of his chest. How does anyone have muscles like that under a t-shirt? It's so bloody unfair.

I pull my head back inside. "We need to leave Wednesday home," I remind Clover.

The taxi takes a left turn, and Gabe disappears from view. My chest aches the more distance I put between us.



I look at Clover and Sari whirling and twirling on the dance floor from the inner balcony on the second floor of the club. I have a Bloody Mary in my hand, and I've told four blokes to sod off already—almost breaking a groping fucker's finger.

All my anger has gone, replaced by disappointment. Will Bez and Gabe ever accept the fact that I'm capable of defending myself? I know it's their way to show me they care and blah, blah, blah. I on the other hand don't care. I want to be respected. I found out I like to be submissive-ish in bed with them, but I won't tolerate being babied outside of it.

"I'm here!" Ollie's voice from behind me makes me smile and surprises me at the same time. "We have around thirty minutes before my beast of a husband comes here with reinforcements to drag us out." I scoff at Rague's possessiveness, but the truth is that I crave Bez's troglodytic ways just as much as Gabe's conniving ones.

"Why are you here?" I ask.

"Sari called, said you were mopping the floor with your long face or something like that."

Sweet idiot.

"So? Wanna talk?" he adds.

"I always need to talk to you," I tell him.

"What, are you sick of talking with the magic mirror on the wall?" he teases.

"How long have you been sitting on that?" I sniff at my bestie.

"A month."

"Prat!" I cuss at him.

"Don't be snippy. You're using your mean voice," he accuses me.

Am I? "No, I am not."

"Mean voice again," he singsongs.

"Why did you make him come?" I ask the universe.

"To talk about your three-way crazy relationship of course. You've never disliked someone like you do Gabe."

"I don't dislike him." Not anymore.

"But you did...hate him?"

I don't think I ever did. "Pleeease. I have a list of archenemies, Gabe doesn't even reach the top ten."

"A list?" Clover asks, suddenly appearing near us, as he passes one of the two drinks he's holding to Ollie.

"Joel Spielberg or Spolger in fifth grade, I freed the poor bees he had in his garage after tying him to a chair. He went into anaphylactic shock."

"It was *Joseph Springer*," Ollie interrupts me. "I forgot, why did you almost kill him?"

My boyish grin comes out at the memory. "He kept bullying me. Nobody tried after that. Mark J. or Michael J. in ninth grade, he stole my pink cotton cardigan, it was the most beautiful piece of clothing I owned. I kicked him in the balls and then fucked his boyfriend. Jeff something, a classmate in my paralegal course, he told the teacher I cheated on a test because he was jealous of my grades. I had to retake the test, and he was kicked out when the school found out he was into bestiality."

"Was he really?" Clover snorts while Ollie shakes his head.

"He had some weird videos on his laptop. I don't really want to get into that." I need to bleach my eyes periodically, but it always comes back.

"You want to hear what I think?" Ollie says.

"Not really."

“You have to, Clover made me come to this trashy club because you’re pouting like a brat while I could be in bed with my hot-as-fuck husband.”

“Does he ever take his dick out of you, or he leaves it there and reattaches himself—Ouch!” He pinches my arm.

“Listen! It was self-fucking-protection. You’ve liked Gabe from the first time you saw him, but you were scared shitless of what you were feeling. Then his other...side showed himself and...”

“It stirred your inner desires.” Clover’s words make me snort this time. Fuck, this second Bloody Mary is strong. Third?

“They stirred my inner murderer,” I counter.

“Your inner serial slut.” I purse my lips at Ollie’s comeback.

“Says the ex-slutbag,” I counter.

“I’m trying to put lipstick on a monkey here.” Clover leaves me confused.

“You mean pig? Lipstick on a pig,” Ollie clarifies.

“Pigs hardly have lips,” Clover states.

“It’s because pigs are ugly,” I say.

“They are not.” I agree with Clover, I was just explaining why the saying uses pigs instead of monkeys.

“And monkeys aren’t?” Ollie frowns at us.

“American sayings are stupid,” he mumbles. Clover is half-Japanese. His English pronunciation is perfect, his wording not so much.

“You love them, Lori, admit it,” Ollie suddenly says.

Did he really use the L-word? Lurve?

“Do you smell toast, coz I think you’re having a stroke, mate.” I grab his arm with fake worry. He bats it away.

“Let me rephrase that, you mule. You *care* for them,” Ollie insists.

“No,” I lie through my teeth. I fucking do, but I’m so upset with them right now, the anger comes back up like bile.

“I can ask Rami to bring your denial file to add more to it,” Clover taunts me.

“Go jump off a cliff.”

“If I want to die, I’ll just get into a car with you behind the wheel.” He sticks his tongue out at me.

I fake a laugh and flip him the bird.

“How is he still alive when he drives like a pill-popping chihuahua?” Ollie talks to Clover like I’m not even here.

“Gabe had a lot of courage when he gave him back the wiener mobile,” Clover adds to it.

“Or maybe he’s just crazy enraptured.”

“Wankers, the both of you. You done? No, let me rephrase that: you done!” I declare, giving them my back.

I suddenly feel Ollie’s body against my spine. He’s taller than me, stronger, and the best friend I could ever find. I hate him!

“I don’t think you listened to me,” he whispers.

“What’s that?” I yell, earning another pinch on my forearm. They hurt like hell.

“I hear you. I’m just *choosing* not to listen.”

“I know you care, more than care about them. Don’t lie to me again, I can read you like the romance books on my Kindle Fire. You’re scared, and you feel inadequate. You want to show them, but mostly yourself, that you are worth it. And you are, Lor. You’ve always followed your path even when it turned terrible, when Gran...” He stops as his voice breaks. And I feel that hole inside of me again, the one that almost disappears when I’m with my boys. They fill that void with their attentiveness and their dominant behavior and...just their presence.

Ollie talks again. “What you did was out of love, a selfless act that showed your devotion. Accept it as love. Stop losing yourself over it.”

“When did you turn so wise, Yoda?” I try to lighten my mood, which has plummeted to the bottom of the ocean.

“Daily injections of happiness help.”

“Are we talking about cum injections... Ouch! Stop pinching me.”

“Stop finding sexual allusion in everything I say. I’m being serious. The bros are possessive fuckers, you can’t change that. Raph, Rague, Rami, Bez and Gabe, Uri, all stubborn and unreasonable at times, and when they care, it borders obsession.”

“Like you aren’t with Rague.” I turn around to look at him in the face.

“Of course, I am. Have you seen him?” He has an idiotic, lovesick expression on his face. Do I have the same one when I think about my boyfriends?

“I just want them to see that I can be like them. That I’m strong and capable and...good.”

“Good-ish,” Ollie teases me. And I let it pass. “You’re amazing, Lori. I hope you can feel that.”

“Like a hammer to the head,” I deadpan.

He rolls his eyes. “Gran would tell you the same if she was here.”

“She’d hit my head with a newspaper and tell me to stop festering in the corner while threatening to sweep me out of the house with the other bugs.” My smile is sad, and she wouldn’t want that either. So, I add, “Did Cloverbell tell you what happened with Uri and Sari?”

Ollie shakes his head, and I retell the mind-blowing lip-sucking incident.

His shocked expression mirrors my previous one. And as I look down at the dance floor again, I see Sari dancing with a very cute bloke. They’re plastered to each other, mimicking a grinding movement that makes me see stars when Gabe does it against me.

“Now let’s go dancing.” Clover reappears near us, and I decide to let go for a while and just go with the flow of the music.

“Whoop-de-fucking-doo,” I cheer before downing the last of my drink. We descend the stairs to the first floor, and before we get swallowed by the dancing crowed, I hear Clover say, “Let’s make a Reuben sandwich!”

What the hell is that?



GABRIEL/BEZALIEL

I find him straight away. Dancing flush against Clover.

That’s vertical fucking! Bez roars, taking over.

I shove a guy to the side that obscures them from me for a second, and as I reach them, I let out a menacing growl. They stop moving, staring at me, Clover smirking, my Little Wasp frowning.

“Look at that jealous scowl,” Clover remarks. “What the hell kind of blow jobs do you give, Lori?”

The thought of my Little Wasp on his knees for someone else enrages me to no end. I move closer to him, grasp his ass, and hoist him up so he’s forced to circle my hips with his legs. I turn toward the exit and walk with only one thought inside my head: making him mine.

“Just for the record, I’m asexual,” I hear Clover yell behind me.

Didn’t expect that, Gabe comments.

“Didn’t expect that,” Little Wasp echoes him. When I open the exit door, his little hands let go of my neck and start pulling on my earlobes. Hard.

“You did your caveman act. Now let me down!” he demands.

“The fuck, I will. And I’ll never, NEVER let you move out.”

He won't, Gabe states.

"You're fucking mad if you think I'll let you lay down the law, Bez." Lori punches my chest, looking daggers at me. My cock turns so fucking hard under his glare.

"You won't leave us!" Gabe snaps, feeling as possessive of Lori as I'm.

"This is madness!" Lori exclaims. "Gabe, Bez put me down!"

"No." I snarl. "I'll fuck some sense into you. I'm so damn hard that I'm about to rip through my jeans." My confession makes him freeze in my arms just as I expected. I find a dark corner outside the club perfect for what I have in mind and push his back hard against the brick wall.

"Fuck!" he gasps.

Easy, Bez, Gabe scolds me.

But I know he loves it when I'm rough, and I need to show him he cannot fuck around unless it's with us.

He also likes when I simply hold him, Gabe insists with his point. I hate to clarify things.

Yeah. You hold him, and I manhandle him. Why do you think he's a damn nympho for us? He can have both worlds.

"You never said anything about being exclusive. You fuck me every night, stuff my throat in the office, you use me and then don't listen to me. So now it's my turn to use someone else—Ow! The fuck!" My teeth sink into the still-raw bruise on his neck; he whimpers, but I feel his cock hardening against my abs.

I pull his slutty skirt even higher than it already is and slide the little pack of lube out of my jeans pocket, opening it with my teeth and pouring it on my fingers.

A hard thrust, and I shove two fingers all the way in, they go deep since we've been fucking his arse two or three times a day for the last two weeks. And he takes them this time too, breaking off in a beautiful, ragged cry.

“This is where Gabe and I fuck,” I growl in his face, scissoring my fingers the way that makes his eyes roll. “This hole. And this hole,” I spear my tongue inside his mouth and give it a long lick before pulling back. His lips follow mine, eyes filled with lust. My beautiful wasp. “No other fucker does that, ever.”

I add a third finger and start fucking him. I feel his heart beating like crazy against my chest. But then he bites my lower lip, and the sting goes straight down to my leaking cock. I growl, and he bites me again, lapping at the indent he’s made with his warm tongue. He tastes sour and sweet.

“Take my cock out,” I order, as I keep moving my fingers in and out. He does what I tell him, pulling his dick out of his jockstrap as well. I thought his choice of underwear was ridiculous, but fuck, I love what easy access I have to his hole.

“More lube in my pocket.”

He grabs the other pack and pours it on our cocks, starting a furious tempo with his smooth, soft hands. The feel of his dick rubbing against mine is damn amazing. I groan as he bites my right nipple through the shirt’s fabric hard enough to send a perfect sting that lodges behind my balls.

“Why didn’t you tell me that fucker stalked you? I had to hear it from Rague,” I let Gabe say, as I’m enjoying the bliss of feeling his hands jerking me off and his inner walls strangling my fingers every time I drag them out.

“I already told you,” he pants, throwing his head back. “You d-don’t listen. Ahhh, right there! Don’t need a white prince saving me.”

“Don’t get confused now, we are no fucking prince. We are the ogre ready to eat you whole.”

I add another finger to prove my point. The fourth one. In this position, he’s at our mercy, unable to move much, pinned to the wall, speared on my fingers. His eyes widen, but he keeps bouncing on them, and his hands don’t stop the frotting.

Gabe’s phone rings, but he doesn’t pick up. He can use our right hand, but he prefers to mold and knead our Little Wasp’s body instead.

Pull his nipple, I tell him. As Gabe does it, he arches and moans loudly against me.

“Yeah, let everybody hear how much you like to be finger fucked by your boyfriends.”

“Yes!”

He’s ours. Putty in our hands.

Fucking ours, Gabe repeats.

“Scratch my back, want to bleed for you,” I tell him darkly. I’d fucking bleeding to death for him.

He lifts one hand as the other keeps its up-and-down movement and slides it inside my t-shirt. He sinks his nails deep and makes an aching path down my back again and again.

I turn fucking feral and start driving my fingers hard and fast, hitting his prostate each time. He goes rigid, I feel his cock swelling against mine, heat rolls from his slit down my shaft as he comes, making dirty noises I want to hear for the rest of my life.

“Use both hands on my cock again.” My growly demand is quickly fulfilled. “Mine is the only dick that’ll ever fuck inside your ass. Mine the only cockhead you’ll ever choke on. Mine the only cum that’ll ever fill your holes. Am I clear?”

His eyes move to mine, and the blazing fire there does it for me. His teeth dig into my pec, and my orgasm barrels into me like a fucking freight train. My cum shoots from my cock, and I bellow, “You’re mine!”

“And mine,” Gabe grunts.

“No, you are mine. Both of you, obstinate idiots. *My men*,” he hisses, as I hold my fingers deep inside his gaping hole.

“Fuck. Oh, fuck yeah. That’s it. Work the head. Jesus!” Jizz keeps coming out, draining my balls empty. “Such a good cock pleaser. Yeah, lick our mixed cum off your fingers, suck them dry.”

I jerk one last time and capture his mouth to taste us together on our tongues before letting Gabe take charge.

This is your hold-him time, I tell him before pushing back.

“I just want you to see me, really see me as your equal,” Lori whispers angrily. His amber eyes wet.

“Lori,” I whisper, low and rough. I cup his face and look him straight in the eyes. He gives me a sad, watery smile. And then buries his face into my neck. His arms wrap tightly around my neck, his chest heaving against mine. His fingers grip my hair.

He came into my life and invaded every corner. Reaching inside my chest, my heart, to my very soul. He ripped it open, releasing the fire I locked within a long time ago.

“I’ll never let you go,” I whisper on his curls. I feel his long, warm sigh on my skin. His soft lips leave a delicate kiss on my neck.

The ringing of my cell cuts through the rest of my words.

“I can’t move,” Lori mumbles. “I’m stuck on your fingers and pinned down.”

Is he complaining? Bez teases.

I pull out my digits. He moans, gripping my t-shirt and I feel the urge to hold him against me longer.

We slowly untangle ourselves, and I’m buttoning my jeans up when my phone goes off again.

It’s Rami. And what he tells me feels like a knife to the heart.

eleven

GABRIEL/BEZALIEL



The coldness has moved inexorably from my chest into my entire body, seeping poison that left me utterly numb. The strong white lights of the hospital waiting room feel like balls of fire pushing on my shoulders, forcing me to hunch against it.

Bez is alert but keeps away.

We are all here. Waiting. Hoping that it's all a mistake.

Raph is sitting, holding Michael's body as it's racked with sobs. Rami is pacing up and down under Hunter's grim gaze. Uri is standing with Sari in his arms, whispering in his ears, trying to calm him down—he kept stopping any nurse or doctor passing by asking for news. Rague has Ollie all wrapped around him, he holds him pinned to the wall, my brother's back keeps shaking. Linda is staring ahead, eyes dim, her pale skin looks almost translucent.

The silence is deafening. Lori is next to me, rigid like a statue. I can't look at him. I feel like if I do, I'll crumble.

"Meg collapsed, and we can't wake her up." That's all Ferdinand told Rami.

Two hours later and still the doctors have nothing to tell us. She is being treated by the best team of doctors, Sari knows most of them, and Rami did

a background check. Doctor Sallinger, the immunologist that is treating her lupus disease is also here.

More time passes. Minutes? Hours? Until a doctor wearing a white coat comes. I only hear three words: coma, cause unknown.

The air stops inside my lungs until I feel a hand touching my arm. It spreads a rush of dread. I'm suddenly assailed by a prickling sensation, like thousands of sharp, searing needles piercing my skin all at once, sinking in. I jerk my arm back, but the pain intensifies.

Get out! Bez screams.

I push away from the chair and run through the corridor. I don't stop when I hear someone calling out for me. I keep going, bumping into people. Every collision push the needles deeper inside my body. Each one a stabbing excruciating pain.

I finally reach the exit. I don't feel the rain at first, but when I do, I welcome the fresh wet sensation on my aching skin. I yank my t-shirt off and toss it on the ground opening my arms and letting the cold drops fall on me.

“Gabe!”

I turn my head toward the screaming voice. Lori is standing a foot from me. His curls are stuck to his face, black makeup rolling down his cheeks. His presence isn't soothing the uneasiness this time. It's making it worse.

“Go inside,” I rasp before I start walking toward my car. I need to leave. I need to get in control of myself again. Pain has its claws in me, I need to placate it. I don't want Lori to see me like this.

I unlock my car and slide inside, not caring about the mess I'm making. As I turn the engine on, the door on the passenger side opens and in gets Lori.

“Get out, go back to the hospital,” I order him through my gritted teeth.

He locks his jaw and seems to mumble something under his breath. After a second, he replies calmly, “No.”

Force him to leave, Bez growls.

“Bez, shut up!” I grab my head and pull my hair, trying to clear my thoughts, but the agony I’m enduring is getting unbearable.

“Get the fuck out, Lori!”

“No,” he repeats with a trembling voice.

“Never do what I tell you!” I mutter. “Fuck, fuck, fuck.” I hit the wheel with each curse. Hating myself when I hear a whimper coming from him. And when I see the silent tears rolling down his face? Shame hits me right in the gut.

“I won’t leave you. Stop wasting time.” His voice cracks, and he pauses a beat before repeating, “I’m not leaving you... Ever.” He adds that last word after a moment, and it holds so much meaning. So much hope. I fear it. It fucking hurts more than anything I’ve ever suffered.

My chest expands slowly as I suck in a deep, painful breath, then exhale it.

“I’d offer to drive, but you think I’m a maniac behind the wheel, so...” He sniffs, pushing his wet locks away from his face. His big brown eyes are filled with sorrow and anguish. His lips look wet.

It’s like I have a magnet in my chest that pulls me inexorably down toward Lori. And the more I fight the force, the more it tears through my bones and flesh, creating a cavernous hole.

The truth hits me with an implacable force: I love Lori. The knowledge is brutal, and it couldn’t have come to me at a worse time. But it assuage some of the suffering I’m feeling, like a soothing balm on an open wound.

“Lori.” His name is a prayer on my lips. To leave? To never leave me?

“Drive. Unless you want to stay in this hospital parking lot. Whatever you need.” His hand lifts, moving toward my arm, but he suddenly halts the movement and lowers it back on his knee. I can see a muscle jump in his jaw before he turns his head toward the drops of water rolling down outside the window.

The rain is still coming down hard as we leave the hospital behind. It takes me longer than usual to get home in this weather, the ache that keeps

penetrating my body doesn't help either. Just like in the car, the ride up to the apartment is filled with a grievous silence. I feel itchy and unstable, need something to stop the pain.

As soon as we step inside the living room, I grab the bottle of whiskey from the sideboard near the window and down two glasses, one after the other. The amber liquid burns on the way down, making it worse.

"What do you need?" Lori asks me, coming back wearing one of his loose t-shirts. He's holding a pair of my sweatpants and tries to hand them to me.

"Go," I say, even though I don't want him to. I just don't want him to see me this unrestrained. This broken.

I pour another whiskey, stretching my neck, rolling my shoulders against the prickling feeling. The hand near my side is twitching and flexing. I drink and drink. A fire is burning me from the inside, a visceral pain that will turn me to ashes.

I let the glass drop on the rug and walk to my knife room. My sanctuary. As I step through the threshold, a little of the pain goes away, but it's not enough. I need to release this ball of dark emotions that is threatening to explode inside me.

Meg. Meg. Meg! I can't lose my mother again. My biological mother's face replaces Meg's, and I scream all my anguish. All my fucking pain.

I can't. I can't.

Breathe, Bez orders me. *Breathe*.

Fuck!

Why aren't you taking over? I angrily ask him.

It's your battle, Gabe. Fight! He states.

Selfish fucker!

I open one of the many drawers of the tall storage unit covering the left wall. They are all filled with knives. My precious collection. I grab some randomly, and turning to the target on the opposite wall, I start tossing

them. One after the other. Not caring if they hit the wooden shape or the wall. I keep throwing. It feels like every blade is spearing my heart. And I don't stop the torment.

I deserve it. All of it. I should have protected her. I failed Meg, just like I failed my mother.

I don't know how long I keep going. My arm aches, but I continue tossing until I feel something wet on my hands. Blood. My blood dripping down my fingers. I must have nicked myself with a blade.

I hear a gasp behind me. When I turn, Lori is staring at my hand.

He takes a single step closer, bringing us less than a foot apart, but doesn't try to touch me. He's so fucking beautiful and infuriating. I grab his hair hard and using a flat, hard tone I say, "You need to..."

"Take care of your hand," he vehemently states.

"What?"

Why did I let him come?

Because you need him, Bez whispers.

"What you need is to leave me the fuck be!" I raise my voice.

"And I already said no." There's no fear in his deep brown eyes, only sadness and acceptance.

I tighten my grip, pulling him onto his tiptoes.

"What do you really need?" he asks me with tears in his gaze.

I close my eyes a moment, my head feels like it's exploding, skin burning, the inner flames are reaching my throat. When I answer him my voice sounds hoarse. "You." A single word, and I surrender.

His gaze flickers between my eyes like he's looking for something. Then he slowly kneels at my feet. His breath catches in his throat as the buttons slip out and my jeans open, revealing the thick head of my cock.

For the first time in the last weeks, I'm not hard near him. The pain is taking everything from me.

My flaccid dick doesn't seem to upset him. His hand rises, about to touch me, and I jerk back. "Don't." It sounds like a plea. My skin feels on fire, too sensitive, too raw.

His eyes turn glassy, and I can't utter another single word. Being careful, he slides down my damp underwear and lightly brush his tongue over the tip. I tense against the touch, but the wet, cool sensation actually ease the ache.

I nod at him and Lori starts worshipping my cock and balls with his mouth. He licks, sucks, and lap at my shaft until I'm hard as a rock. His fuckable mouth massage the head, tongue twisting around it, stopping on the slit to taste my pre-cum. The pain is slowly engulfed in pleasure, crushed by Lori's expert lips.

I run my fingers into his damp curls to get a better grip and push until my cockhead nudges the back of his throat, stretching him, filling him. Owning him. So. Fucking. Mine.

A hot, tight, strangling vise, eager to be fucked. He looks exquisite like this, kneeling, mouth impaled on my cock, eyes watering. It makes me shiver with lust and possessiveness. I feel his wet, warm tongue under my length as I'm still lodged in his throat. And push deeper until a soft choking noise makes me pull out enough for Lori to breathe. But only enough.

Keeping his head still, I thrust roughly down his throat, stretching him wide. I fuck his mouth mercilessly, holding him in place, and forcing every long and thick inch inside him. For once, I don't care about anything but reaching my ecstasy.

I'm using him, and although I know this is wrong, that I should think about him as well, I can't stop. I need this. Him like this. Yielding to me completely.

He opens his mouth wider and relaxes even more and just takes it. Every single hard thrust, moaning in bliss, gazing up at me, lusty eyes half-lidded.

"Fuck yes, just like that. Suck harder," I demand, rolling my hips to meet the next bob of his head. Damn, I want to fuck and wreck his mouth until

the end of me, fill it with cum until his stomach turns round. Have my cock inside of him for so long that he never feels empty ever again.

His lips are swollen as I keep ramming my dick down his strangling throat. I let go of his hair and lay my bloody hand across his neck, squeezing. My blood is among his locks, and now on his skin too. It turns me the fuck on.

“I can feel my cock moving in you,” I gasp, and squeeze harder, looking at the tears rolling down his cheeks. Jesus Christ, he’s a fucking vision.

My stomach clenches, and my eyes roll back as pleasure rushes through me. My nails dig into the side of his neck as my cock keeps jerking, spurting cum inside my beautiful Lori.

When I pull out, my dick is still hard and bursting with want. His lips are shiny with my jizz. The urge to lean down and suck that soft dip, abuse it more, taste myself in his mouth, hits like a wrecking ball. But I have other plans as I feel the prickling resurface slightly.

“Don’t swallow, spit it on my cock.” Lori looks at me wide-eyed, but does as I say.

“Up,” I order. Then I pull off his shirt and roughly bend him over the back of a chair. I slide my hands down to his thighs and wrench him open, spreading his legs obscenely wide to display his gorgeous ass and red pucker.

I spit on his hole and rub my cock over it, transferring some of my cum to make it slick. It looks swollen, tender from the earlier finger-fucking Bez gave him. Beautifully ready for a pounding.

The head of my cock notches against his soft hole, sending a wave of pure desperate need through me. I lay one hand on Lori’s ass cheek, pulling him open with my thumb, adding to the stretch as my thick tip eases in. The tightness inside is enough to make my cock jerk, spilling pre-cum, painting his clenching walls.

I pull back, the slide of my heavy cock leaving him feels wrong because it belongs inside Lori. All the fucking way inside his wet hole. I let out a growly curse, and without a warning, I fill him up in one hard, brutal thrust,

forcing his body to arch toward the ceiling. He throws his head back with a long, sexy, filthy moan.

The aching burning inside me disappears replaced by unmeasurable pleasure.

Give in, Bez tells me.

Yes.

That's my last coherent thought as I start nailing him without mercy. It's as I let go of the last of my ability to hold myself back. I feel him gasp for air as he melts under my fast battering.

"Gabe. Love your cock. Fuck me open."

So dirty. So freeing. I pound him into jelly, cock surging so deep into him with every snap of my hips that he can't do anything but take it.

Spank his ass. Show him who he belongs to, Bez groans.

My hand falls down hard as my dick keeps piercing his shiny pucker ruthlessly.

My balls ache, full and ready to burst. He's clenching rhythmically around me, and I hear the wet sound of his hand working over his cock just before his orgasm rolls over him all at once. His inner muscles tighten around me, and he screams my name.

He's still sobbing as my climax hits a few seconds later. I let out a deep, animalistic sound that echoes in the room and vibrates through my chest. My balls constrict as the heat in my stomach explodes and spreads through my chest and limbs. Everywhere. I thrust deeper, burying myself inside him, enjoying his whimpers. My whole body trembles, heart races.

Little shivers flicker through him as I pull out. He's wet and stretched, ass cheeks red, body slumped on the chair. I did that to him. My cum starts rolling down his legs, and it's a masterpiece. If I knew where my phone was, I'd take a picture.

I take off my wet jeans and shoes and haul a limp Lori into my arms, bridal style. I walk to my bedroom and sit on my bed. Back against the headboard.

Lori warm and pliant on my lap.

“You need more?” he mumbles against my shoulder. The level of empathy in his voice has a knot forming in my throat.

“Not now. But I need you near me, Lori.” I’ve been naked with numerous lovers, but I never felt this bare. This exposed.

He lifts his head to look me in the eyes. His gaze is searching. When he opens his mouth, though, he doesn’t ask me what I expected. “Is Bez okay?”

“I am, Little Wasp.” He smiles hearing Bez’s statement.

“What happened, Gabe?”

I take a big breath and squeeze my eyes. “I like control. I need it. The thing is that I need to vent somehow, and killing donors is my way. When I let too much time pass, I start feeling uneasy. My skin itches, aches, I feel off, unstable. Until you came.”

“Me?” His eyes widen with surprise.

“When you’re near me, when you let me touch you, fuck you, and I feel your hands on me, the sensation disappears,” I confess.

“Not today.” He looks down at his hands on his lap. He hasn’t touched me since the hospital, when I jerked back. I grab his hand and kiss each finger before placing his palm on my cheek. He sighs, like the contact soothes him as well.

“I don’t know what happened today. I’ve never felt this level of pain. Not since I was a kid. Hearing about Meg, it took me back to what happened to my mother. How I lost her because of what I did. I couldn’t protect her, just like I couldn’t protect Meg.” I pause as sorrow falls silently in my heart. The prickling tries to come back, but I wrap my arms around Lori and hold him tightly against me, taking a giant hit of lilies and pushing the unwanted feeling away. “It was, it still—it hurts.”

“I know.” His voice is filled with tears.

“I didn’t want you to see me like this. But it turns out all I needed is you.”

His wet smile is filled with joy as he brushes his fingers over my short beard, nose, and eyebrows. I sigh at feeling his calming touch on me again. When he gets to my lips, I nip his thumb. He giggles and gives a light peck on my mouth.

“Is what Sari said true? About you and Bez?”

I search my memory. “You mean the fact that Bez doesn’t come out much?”

He nods.

“It’s true. He doesn’t like my family.”

“They are boring and annoying,” Bez clarifies.

“You don’t like anybody,” I tell him.

“But my Little Wasp,” he adds.

Lori bites his lower lip, and I might be wrong, but I think seeing me and Bez interact like this with him turns him on.

“Is he coming out more because of me?” He knows the answer already, he just wants to hear it from us.

“Yes. I’ve wanted you since the first time I saw your round ass bouncing in front of my eyes,” Bez crassly says.

“You’ve been fucking me both at the same time lately. Why didn’t Bez come out before?” he asks in a low tone.

“What, you prefer Bez?” I can’t hide the bitterness in my voice. Since Lori came into my life, I’ve let emotions govern me once again, especially when I’m around him.

“Are you jealous?” Lori seems shocked, while Bez snorts. “How can you be jealous of an identity that your mind created?”

“Answer the question,” I insist, not wanting to analyze how what Lori just said makes perfect sense.

Everything about him becomes uncharacteristically hesitant. “I love to be taken by both of you because it’s you. Gabe, Bez, I don’t care. It’s you. I

love both my boys.”

Everything stills except my heart that tries to claw its way out of my chest.

“Of course, you do. You’re ours,” Bez replies smugly.

“You love both of us?” I feel a weird stretch on my lips, and judging by Lori’s starstruck look, I might be smiling. But how can I not when I discover that my love is reciprocated?

“I did it!” He raises both arms in the air. “Blimey. Your smile is a lethal weapon.” He suddenly frowns. “Don’t you dare do it with anybody else. Only me!”

“You’ve seen Bez smile many times.”

“He smirks. It’s different. You are different, I’ve never thought I could love two men at the same time. In the past, I got easily bored with one; two seemed double the boredom. I was wrong. I was just waiting for you two, I guess. Love is not finite. The best thing about it is that there’s always more to give.”

Fuck. My Lori is just amazing. “Promise?” I echo his word. The longing in my voice is clear.

He straddles me. Cups my face in his tiny hands and whispers with a thick voice against my lips, “Promise.” Then he kisses me. With his arms wrapped tightly around my neck, legs squeezing my hips, and lips devouring mine, Lori seems to say, “Don’t leave me.” And I never will.

When we part, his contented little sigh makes me smile again.

“I’m not good at expressing my feelings,” I start saying.

Feelings, schmeellings. He’s ours. The end.

Thank you for sharing, Bez, but Lori deserves more than that.

He blows a raspberry. I ignore him.

“I wrapped caution tape around my heart. I never thought I’d find someone who could win me over and accept my multiplicity. And then you came

with all your incongruities, all your facets, your sassiness, crazy talk, and stubbornness.”

“I am the stubborn one?” He sniffs.

I kiss his nose. “You enraptured us with your acceptance and your love. Being drugged sped things up. But you and us were inevitable.”

Tears fall down his cheeks onto my chest as the most beautiful smile curls his lips. “Bloody hell, you win the express-your-feelings award.”

“We did? And what’s our prize?” Bez growls, our hips thrusting upward against Lori’s ass.

He flings himself at us, molding his mouth to ours, kissing us with rough desperation.

Sometime later, we are lying on the bed. Bez is sleeping. I can’t. I feel love welling up in me, bursting out of my pores. It sneaks past my sorrow and into my heavy heart, filling it with light.

The shadows are still there, though. The doctors have no idea why Meg is in a coma.

Her lupus has given her ups and downs through the years; I thought it was simply a difficult period. We all did. She never talked about it. Always diminishing her condition, not wanting to burden us. Maybe I took my stubbornness from her.

“Did it hurt?” I ask Lori.

“Huh?” He sounds sleepy, who wouldn’t be after three orgasms?

“When your gran died.”

He doesn’t tense against me, but I feel a change in him. “It felt like tearing my heart out of my chest. The bleeding hole is still here,” he whispers. His voice sounds strangely empty.

“Tell me.”

He pulls back and sits, hugging his knees to his chest. I shift until my back is against the headboard and wait for him to keep going.

“I have a dark spot on my soul, can’t you see it?” His voice quivers. “I killed her,” he brokenly says. His grief-stricken eyes make me feel helpless. “Guilt rattles me every single day. It’s a beast that can’t be tamed.”

“What happened?” I want to touch him, hold him, protect him from everything painful in the world, but he doesn’t look like he’d accept it right now. I need to let him come back to me.

Bez is awake now, alert once again. He felt my worry for Lori.

“She had lung cancer. Loved her cigars. I still remember the bitter smell of them. Strange how a memory can be comforting and painful at the same time.” He pauses, swallowing. “The doctor gave her only three months to live. The first was rough, she worsened quickly. She was in so much pain. Gran had always been a very independent woman, full of life, walking her path with her head high. It was harder for her, not even being able to go to the bathroom by herself.” Lori wipes a tear with the back of his hand.

“One night, her heart stopped. The paramedics were able to revive her, and she stayed in the hospital for a couple of days. I could see something had changed in her. Her fighting spirit was gone. She signed a DNR, and when I took her back home, she...she told me she didn’t want to die in a hospital, to be put to sleep until her death occurred. She didn’t want me to wait next to her, day after day.” His smile is heartbreakingly sad. “So, she got a medication from a nurse. A medical aid in dying, it’s called. Which, as you know, is illegal in Illinois. I tried to stop her, but when she made a decision, she rarely changed her mind. The next day, she said it was a good day to die, but she couldn’t inject the medicine. Her hands were trembling. So...” His voice breaks into sobs, and he pushes his forehead to his knees.

I’ve heard enough. I slide my arms under him and scoop him up, positioning him on my lap. He wraps his arms around my neck as he keeps crying unconsolably.

“Shhh. You did good, Lori,” Bez uses a soothing voice I’ve never heard from him before.

“I should have stopped her. Should have tried to change her mind. I was so weak, so stupid.”

“She would have found another way, another day. She would have been alone. Instead, you were there. You were not weak, you are the strongest person I know,” I tell him.

“I can’t even go back into her house. I see her everywhere, in the pots she bought from a stupid commercial on TV, in the ashtrays she made herself, in the books she loved to read. It hurts so damn much.”

“We will when you’re ready,” I say.

“We?” His voice is filled with so much hope and sorrow.

“Silly Little Wasp,” Bez whispers.

“We love you, Lori Boone. You belong with us. It’s a promise.” I kiss his wet cheek and push his curls back.

“Love you right back,” he whispers.

“Your gran sounded amazing. I wish I met her.”

“She loved spicy romance, if we put her urn in here, she’ll have a front seat to your hotness every night.” I’m glad to hear some mirth in his voice again.

“And morning,” I add.

“She wanted to be tossed in Lake Michigan, but I-I can’t let her go.”

Ollie let it slip out when I asked him about the urn. I open the nightstand and pull out a silver chain with a small pendant. A ball I had made for Lori. I place it in his palm. “It’s a tiny urn. If you twist the bottom, it opens, so you can keep a very small part of her always with you.” Lori stares at me, eyes unblinking.

Did you break him with the mushy present? Bez grunts.

“Uh, you can also engrave the ball, writing something to remember her with.” Still nothing.

He hates it! Stop talking.

“If it’s a bad idea, just forget about it. We can put it back—” I try to take it from his palm, but Lori makes a fist around it.

“This is crazy,” he finally breaths out. “How can you be this perfect when I thought you were all wrong?”

A wave of relief washes over me and our crazy, consuming love seems to sparkle all around us.

Then I hear a thump coming from the bathroom in the corridor—Wednesday’s room now—just as my phone starts ringing. It’s Rague.

“I’ll go check on her, you answer the phone,” Lori tells me after giving me a hard kiss.

“Any news?” I say into the phone.

“Not what you’re expecting. Meg is still the same. Raph, Michael, and Linda are at the hospital with her.”

“So, what is it?”

“Someone dropped Philip Bailey, tied up like a pig, on Uri’s lake house steps. He’s still alive, but he had an arrow in his left arm and one in his left cheek...ass cheek.”

Fuck yes, Bez comments.

“Do we know who?”

He grunts. “Nope. You need to come to the base. Bring Lori. I have a little surprise for you.”

“Coming.” I leave the bed, and Lori is back just as I hang up. “Meg?” he asks, leaving Wednesday on the floor. She starts pecking at the carpet. I’ll have to change it soon if she keeps using her beak to make holes.

“No, but Philip Bailey is at the base.”

“They got him?! I’m coming too!” he hurriedly says, taking a defensive stance, which is not very convincing since he’s butt naked. And all mine.

Ours, Bez reminds me.

“You are coming.”

“I’ve been taking care of myself all my life,” he keeps going like an unstoppable train. His index finger already poking my pec.

“Lori, you are,” I repeat, grabbing that finger and sucking it between my lips.

“I am?” My words finally get to him. He blinks up at me, his brown pools a little glassy, making me smirk.

I leave the finger with a pop and pull him toward the bathroom, enjoying how small and soft his hand feels in my own bigger palm—and his round butt cheek in the other.



LORI

I take the last step of the metal stairs that end inside the base. Gabe pulls me toward the FUNS room; the tiny, round urn swings around my neck. I stop when I hear a “Fuck, fuck, fuck!”

I see Ollie and Sari walking inside the lab while talking animatedly. I send a glance to Rague and Uri in the FUNS room standing near a naked man tied to a chair. And then turn again toward the lab.

“Give me a sec,” I tell Gabe, as I let go of his hand and make my way to the lab’s door. I type in the code and enter.

“My huevos are on fire!” Ollie hisses.

Sari looks frantic. “Why did you...”

“What’s going on?” I ask, reaching them near Sari’s desk.

“I drank the potion.” Ollie slaps a hand on his forehead, looking weirdly restless.

“A witch potion?” I ask, confused.

“The drug! The one you ingested,” Sari explains. “I had a few samples on the desk, and he accidentally took one.”

“How the hell did you do that?” I look at my bestie in shock.

“It was in a glass, or it looked like a glass. I thought it was my water, I wasn’t thinking! I’m worried about Rague,” he says nervously. His face is turning red, and he’s fidgeting.

“Bloody hell, mate. You’re a disaster,” I huff at him.

“Fuck you, Lori!”

“Let’s calm down. He only took a sip,” Sari tries, but he looks more agitated than Ollie.

“Much less than me. That’s good. How do you feel?”

“Heated, jumpy, horny as hell,” he growls.

“No pain?”

“Not yet.” As soon as he says the words, he bends in two and groans.

“Damn it, he’ll turn into a sex maniac very soon,” I state.

“I don’t know how to process that.” Sari frowns at me. “Maybe—”

Ollie cuts Sari off. “Help me, you idiots!”

“So rude.” I glare at him.

“I have a sedative!” Sari suddenly exclaims.

Ollie lets out a scream.

“No sedative. Go call KKJ. Now!”

Sari runs out of the lab, and I instantly move closer to Ollie, freezing when I see his eyes full of desire zero in on me. *Oh. Fuck the hell, no!*

“Ollie. I love you, but I’ll skin myself and let badgers lick me raw before touching you in that way.”

“You’re such a dick! I don’t want you! But I would have done it for you. I almost... Ahhhh!”

“What the fuck?” Rague barrels into the lab and hoists a moaning Ollie in his arms.

“Beastie, I need you...to fuck me. So much.” He starts humping his husband, reminding me of my first time with Gabe and Bez. The good and the bad.

“Kitty, I’ll take care of all your needs.”

“Go!” I tell him.

He nods and then disappears, out and up the stairs.

“It’s all my fault. I did this!” Sari looks on the verge of tears, pulling on his long braid. “I should have been more careful.”

I try to calm him down. “Angel, you actually gifted them a few hours of multiple-orgasm shagging. No worries.”

He wipes the tears under his light blue eyes, leaving his glasses on the tip of his nose.

“How are you?” At the hospital he looked devastated, wretched, inconsolable.

“I...I need to go back to work.” He averts his eyes and walks back to the desk. He keeps so much inside.

“I’m always available if you fancy a talk,” I let him know, hoping he’ll come to me when he needs.

As I open the lab door, I hear his soft thank you.

Gabe is still waiting for me outside, typing on the phone.

“Looks like Ollie and KKJ are going to be busy.” I sigh, lacing my fingers with his.

His lip twitches. It’s okay. I know how to make him smile fully. But now is revenge time.

I look at the glass wall facing the FUNS room and only now notice two naked, unconscious men strapped to two different boards—those are for Gabe's knife-throwing practice. Wait, they are the Skid Mark brothers!

“Ready?” Gabe asks me, pocketing his cell.

“I was born ready. Bez, are you?”

“Yes,” he replies.

I enter the FUNS room with my boys. It's a large room covered in plastic sheets—easier to clean. Today the color is prison jumpsuit orange—I love Rami's craziness. There's a large sink in the back with a hose and a bucket, and a small table covered with some instruments of torture. Rague installed chains coming from the high ceiling with a hook at the end, from which more tools are hanging. My eyes find a baseball bat. I need to thank him later.

Uri is standing near a suffering and gagged Bailey, shooting him a non-smile that would give most normal people screaming nightmares.

“Normal people are boring,” I say out loud.

“Normal is a stupid word,” Uri retorts.

Bailey has an arrow sticking from his shoulder, and since he's sitting, they must have removed the other from his ass. I wonder who is the intrepid Robin Hood that gave us such a present.

Bailey also has various cuts all over his body and some burns, two fingers on one hand are missing. Who did this to him?

“Did Rami discover who delivered Bailey to your door?” Gabe asks his brother. He looks a bit tense, his fingers keep flexing between mine.

“No. The guy had a white mask on his face and was wearing a hoodie.” Uri grits his teeth.

Pity. I'd like to send him a basket of fruit or something.

Wait, a white mask? “Is it a fashion statement? I saw a bloke with a white mask like three times in the last couple weeks.”

Uri's eyes jump to mine. "You did? Where?" He sounds very interested.

"Uhm, the first time outside the firm building, for less than a second before the elevator's door closed. I thought I imagined him, but then I saw him at Crimson before getting dosed."

"What was he doing?" Uri insists.

"Nothing, just standing near a column." I shrug. "I saw him last two days ago outside your restaurant downtown, the one on restaurant row."

Uri nods, seemingly lost in thought.

"Do you think there's a connection with Bird Turd and the white-masked guy?" I ask Gabe.

"Bird Turd?" Uri inquires.

"Phoenix," Gabe explains.

"No connection," Uri answers.

"We can't dismiss any theory," Gabe states.

"He worked on Bailey before dropping him off at my house. Why would he do that if he was on Phoenix's side?" Uri insists.

"Maybe they want to get rid of Bailey, and we're actually doing their dirty work for them." Gabe's theory is plausible, but from what I learned about Phoenix, they like to get their hands bloody.

Raph's voice suddenly resounds in the room from the intercom. "Rami said that Bailey has been having fun with minor prostitution lately on top of illegal drugs. The Dorridges liked that as well, very much."

"Well, that adds a whole new layer of horror to this," Michael mutters. I look at the glass wall; they're standing there, looking tired. They stayed at the hospital with Meg a long time. Rami must be there now.

"Linda?" I ask.

"Doesn't want to leave Meg." Michael sighs. I did the same with Gran. I understand.

Bailey moans, saliva drools down the corners of his mouth.

“Did Sari take the samples?” I ask, and Uri nods. Sari always takes donor samples. He’s a medical researcher, and he exploits the donor’s body to find new cures or remedies. The bros have an amazing thing going here.

Gabe’s eyes are fixed on Bailey. I try to take a step toward the weapons, but Gabe’s hand doesn’t let go. I frown.

I glance at Michael, and his face reflects the same confused expression, because Gabe looks uneasy when he never looks anything but cold around the donors.

I move back to him and whisper, “Everything okay?”

“Bez never came to play in the FUNS room. Ever. He’s unstable when he comes out to protect me. I have no memory of my father’s death—Bez switched taking complete control—but I remember standing near his mutilated corpse. It was a blood bath.”

Gabe told me about his father’s disembowelment at Bez’s hands.

“If you see what he’s capable of... We won’t let you go, Lori. We can’t.” Is he afraid I’ll be scared of them? After everything we went through? Preposterous.

“I’m not interested in donors. But this is a revenge kill. For you. For what’s mine, and I want it,” Bez declares.

For a long second, I gaze at him, the fire in his eyes is replaced by something else that makes me nearly shiver. I dreamed about a thousand death scenarios for Bailey since he gave me that drug. But I realize that Bez needs this more than me.

“Then have your fun,” I tell him. “Gabe, let him do it. Trust me.” He squeezes my hand, and I take that as a yes.

“Let him.” I hear Bez snorting as he mocks my words. I pucker my lips, getting a quick slap on my ass as he lets go of my fingers and moves toward Bailey. No weapon in his hands. He pulls down the gag and stares at him.

“I’m not going to tell you fuck. I already said everything to your sadistic masked friend. Plus, I’m dead anyway.” He spits on Bez’s t-shirt.

“Don’t like talking,” Bez replies before yanking hard on the arrow in his shoulder, pulling on it with a slow move until it is fully out. The scream that leaves the donor reaches the devil’s throne. It intensifies when Bez punches the wound once, twice, three times until we hear a crack. Then he pushes two fingers inside the bleeding wound and pulls on the broken bone, tearing flesh to take it out.

Uri and Raph have deadpan expressions on their faces, but when I glance at Michael, he looks enraptured. He has a thing about blood.

Me? I’m equal parts grossed out and turned on by his ruthless, vicious methods.

Bailey starts begging, but when it doesn’t work, he confesses everything. How Phoenix contacted him over the internet. How he was promised a huge slice of the pie when the drug hit the streets. He tested the first three types on people at his sex club, blackmailing his rich clients at the same time—like he tried with Gabe. He never met Phoenix, they only exchanged texts, but he has dates, places, and times of the next three shipments, and the names of the dealers who are supposed to sell it.

Fifteen minutes later Bailey is sweating profusely, head lolling on the side, whimpering. Bez’s chest is heaving, eyes staring at his gruesome masterpiece with satisfaction. He suddenly lifts his boot and stomps on the maggot’s foot. I hear crunching noises mixed with wailing as he grinds his heel.

“I told you everything I know, I swear,” Bailey cries.

“Don’t care.” Bez goes to his wrist next. He unties it and then proceeds to fold it, pushing the fingers until they touch his forearm. More blood, cracking noises, more white bones on display. He keeps going until all the maggot’s bones in his four limbs are broken and my stomach feels upside down. This will go into my torture record book.

“You should be thankful you didn’t touch what’s mine,” Bez tells Bailey, taking three steps back as he cleans his hands on his t-shirt.

“Have fun, Little Wasp.” He smirks at me, and then his lips turn down. Gabe is back. He looks down at his bloody clothes and sighs.

I go to him and brush away some red drops from his chin. “I’ll give you a shower later.” I smile at him, showing him I’m still utterly consumed by him. And he nods.

“Big fan of your better side,” Uri tells Gabe.

“He’s hotheaded, but he can crack a bone.” Raph always sounds uninterested.

“Now it’s my turn,” I announce as I move toward the chains hanging from the ceiling. I choose the bat, of course. “Michael, let me hear about a disturbing method of torture.” It’s a hobby of his. I like it.

“How about immurement? It’s a form of execution in which a person is sealed within an enclosed space without any exits. In this form of execution, the victim generally dies of dehydration and starvation, and then is slowly eaten by insects.”

Okay.

“Sounds boring. Bodies are made of goo and juice, just take the goo out. The end,” Uri replies.

“I want to try that,” Raph says.

Michael keeps talking, but I tune him out.

The bat I’m holding is not as good as mine, but it will do. I roll it like a pro before a baseball game and move toward Bailey first. He’s not moving and bleeding from too many wounds, but I still hit his face with the bat. Twice. I owe him that. I can see his cheek ripple under the force and weight of the wood and his temple crack.

“Is he still alive?” I ask Uri. He shakes his head. A wave of justice and satisfaction washes over me, but I don’t have time to enjoy it fully yet. The Skid Mark brothers are waiting.

They woke up at Bailey’s third scream and look scared shitless. Their shocked expressions turned into threats and then begging. Now they’re both

trembling silently, especially as I make my way to the older one. He slides his beady eyes from my high boots to my tight legging and white tank top. Even a few minutes before dying, he's still a slimy, disgusting prick.

"Help me," he pleads.

"After you paid someone to kidnap me? I'm here to kick your ass." I swing the bat, nailing him right on the hand that touched me. He screams bloody murder, and I smirk.

"You won't get away with it," the younger brother yells, shivering like a leaf in the wind. He's glaring at me and Gabe. "I knew there was something fucked up about you!"

"The only thing fucked up here is the way you like to force yourself on minors," Uri says, as Gabe's first knife flies through the air and pierces the maggot's ear. The second hits his pinky. Third and fourth, his testicles. *Such precision.* His cries resound inside the room, followed by his brother's cussing.

"My boyfriend is... What is a person obsessed with knives called?"

"Aichmomaniac," Michael comes to my aid.

"Need to know how to spell that. But to be more specific, he likes to use people as a target and to cut them in pieces."

A squeaking noise comes out the younger maggot's throat. Blood rolls down his legs.

"Quit being such a whiner," I tell him. "You pretended to be a badass when you demanded I be fired!" My bat swings again, hitting his brother's knee. More screams echo among the four walls. I like the sound that a bat makes when it hits bones. It's a very specific one. It reminds me of spring for some unknown reason.

"Aren't you sorry now?" I ask rhetorically, because I know he isn't. Not really. "For all the people you assaulted?"

"Yes! Please," he yells. I roll my eyes and hit him in the dick. Twice. Wincing both times. But it's for all the victims who felt violated because of

him.

I turn to Gabe again. He looks fucking spectacular right now. He doesn't utter a word or lose his composure as he tosses his knives. *Purrrr!* The way he prepares himself, the icy precision in his eyes just before he throws, and the rapidity of his movements. I'll probably nut in my legging if I keep looking.

I swing my bat upward, shattering the maggot's jaw and then getting his temple, knocking him out. I don't care if he's dead or not. I've had enough.

I drop the bat on the floor, it rolls for a couple of seconds and stops at Uri's feet. He's looking at me, but doesn't say anything.

My arms ache, but I feel so damn good. This is what I want. What I need. To share everything with them.

I move near Gabe, and he looks down at me before tossing two knives almost at the same time, without taking his eyes off me. The blades slice the air and get both brothers in the head.

So bloody hot. If what I'm feeling is wrong, I don't give a shite.

"I love the way the corner of your lip curls just before you toss a knife," I tell him, wrapping my arms around his neck and smiling up at him, not caring about the blood on our clothes. It's amazing how his blond hair is still perfectly styled. No wild strand in sight.

"I love you," he says, and bloody hell, it's nice to hear it.

"What now?" I ask.

"Now you learn how to be mine," he declares.

"What is that supposed to mean?" I narrow my eyes at him. "I don't need to learn anything from you, you thickheaded, stuck-up, arrogant—"

He shuts me up with a short but dirty kiss. "Do you always have to fight back, Lori?"

"Always," I echo.

"I'll have to get used to it," he utters simply.

“Promise?”

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epilogue

LORI



“Give me that mouth,” Gabe grunts as he pistons inside my stretched hole on the cold kitchen counter. My chest is heaving with every harsh breath.

He can take it, easily. He knows I won’t object, but he wants that sweet surrender from me. He needs to see how much I crave him. I tilt my head and pucker my lips, waiting for his mouth to touch mine. As I feel the light brush, my teeth sink into his lower lip, and I suck hard.

“Milk my cock, put that hole to good use, Little Wasp.” Bez slaps my ass cheek and then grabs it hard, his palm right on the tattoo of the number five I had done two weeks ago for my boys’ birthday. They have to take me doggie style at least once a day now, love fucking me with their eyes on their mark of possession.

Simply groaning his own pleasure into my ear, he shakes in my arms, hips jerking, his cockhead punching into me with every buck of his hips. I feel his cum shooting deep inside me, filling me so full I’ll never be without him.

“Lori, mmm. Clench.” It’s Gabe’s turn to spank me now while grinding his cock inside me. There is nothing hotter than hearing and feeling him losing his mind over me. Having this kind of power over someone like him, who always stays in control, feels headier than sniffing a new designer bag.

He calls the shots during sex most of the time, and maybe I like it this way. But I can make him shiver just by kissing him.

I'm well used every night, and the way my boys look at me when I grimace while sitting down nearly takes us right back to bed.

I can't believe I lived an entire lifetime before I met them. I can't even remember how it felt falling asleep without Gabe's arms around me—Bez is not a cuddler but I still love him for a hundred different reasons.

The scent of sex fills the room, making my head spin. The lean, muscular body on top of me seems to have been made for me, every valley, and curve aligns perfectly with my own.

He pulls out, and I already feel colder and lonelier for the loss. But since we have somewhere to be, I force my legs down from his hips, allowing his cock to slide free. A trickle of semen follows, slicking my thighs. I clench the muscles of my ass, trying to keep it inside, but more of his cum trickles out of me.

I shift my weight, then flatten my feet on top of the counter and reach between my legs, lifting my balls out of the way, exposing myself to him completely. I know how much Bez enjoys seeing me full of him, marked and owned. His chest rises and falls sharply, his fists grip my ankles. In a moment, he'll be hard again.

I'm that good.

His hair looks wildly tousled from my hands. His cheeks flushed, pecs and neck filled with bruises, and his eyes pure, melted silver.

I feel smug and loose, floating on a post-coital sea.

“How do I look?” I ask, tone a little sassy.

“Like mine,” Bez whispers, spreading his cum over my inner thighs.

I hear Wednesday's little claws clicking on the floor. Gabe made her a small chicken coop on the balcony after installing a metal net to cover it all. He says he doesn't like her, especially when she steals his wallet or ruins his

carpets, and they engage in long stare battles. I think they'll soon fall in love, though. Bez, of course, adores her.

My boys are like ice and fire, opposites who only gang up to make me do something.

I'll start my university course in September. Gabe and Bez forced me into it. They made a university scholarship fund for Spencer, the bloke that lived near my old apartment. He called Gabe, and in exchange for his help protecting Gabe's car, he asked for a job. Ballsy right?

He's a good kid, trying to change the cards that fate dealt him. Gabe told him no, but offered him the scholarship. Then my boyfriends decided that I should go too, full-time, and Gabe threatened not to give the scholarship to the boy unless I accept one as well.

Tosser. I didn't fall for it, not at first, but Bez's skilled mouth made me yield...fairly quickly. They also paid all my gran's medical bills. I'm grateful, I really am, but I still get mad when they tell me about a fact after it's done. Especially if it's about me.

"Are you still pouting about the bills I paid?" Gabe asks me, he's a mind reader now.

"Again the Paddington hard stare? It's never worked on me, Gabe."

He brushes with a finger the heart-shape engraving on the tiny urn pendant hanging from my necklace. We spread the rest of Gran's ashes in Lake Michigan from Uri's house a month ago. It was hard letting her go, but she'll never really leave me while I honor her memory.

I still can't go inside her house. A step at a time, right?

"Why do you always call me Gabe?" he suddenly asks.

"Isn't it your name?" I joke, sitting up to nip at his lower lip. The large glass door on the left lets the morning light shine brightly inside the living room. The sunrays hitting him from this angle give him a diaphanous, angelic appearance. He's magnificent, and it makes me want to do wicked, dirty things to him.

“Why don’t I have a nickname like the others?” he insists, like a dog with a bone, or a hardheaded idiot that doesn’t know when to kiss his boyfriend back.

“Oh, I have a few things I’d like to call you,” I reply.

“Tell me.” His lips curl slightly. Fucking hell! Yep, he does that now, but only when he wants something from me because he knows I can’t resist his almost-smile.

“I... You’ve always been Gabe to me. Couldn’t give you any other name,” I try to explain. He’s not even listening to me, looking for something inside his jeans pocket. I swear to God, if he pulls out his phone, I’ll cut him.

“How about husband?” he says as he slips a beautiful ring on my finger. It has three stones, the center one is a diamond, emerald cut, the other two on each side are round and smaller. It’s breathtaking.

“This ring was made from the blade of my most precious knife. The sharpest and deadliest,” Gabe tells me as I’m trying to stop my heart from exploding out of my chest.

“The two rubies on the sides are Gabe and me.” Bez squeezes my thigh.

“The diamond in the center is you. We remain near you and cherish you as you shine brightly. Our Lori,” Gabe adds.

“You gave me a sandwich ring.” My voice quivers. I gaze up at him, my eyes turn blurry as his confused face swims in front of me. “Does this mean you want me to live with you permanently?” I dumbly ask.

“You were never going to leave.” He has a soft, fond look that I’m sure nobody has ever seen but me. His strong, muscular arm loops around my waist, his big hand resting possessively on the swell of my arse as he pulls me against him.

“I love you boys so much.” I let out a wet laugh, never felt happier in my life.

“Is that a yes?”

“Crikey, yes!” I scream, kicking my legs out.

“Kiss us,” Bez growls.

“And then marry us,” Gabe orders. That almost-smile graces his lips, and then it expands, spreading across his face as he stares at me. Delight is in every feature of his face. *I did this.*

The world blurs around us. But Gabe remains in sharp detail. Blond hair falling across his forehead, light gray eyes with blue streaks, long straight nose, and wide shoulders.

“I want to ride you until you flatline,” I whisper darkly, feeling his dick hardening against my thigh.

“Do you want our cock, Little Wasp?” Bez grunts, already lining the tip to my slick entrance.

“Always,” I moan as he starts pushing.

“Let’s celebrate our engagement,” Gabe says, before giving a hard thrust.



Hours later, we enter the hospital and walk toward Meg’s room. A month and a half has passed since that horrible night, and she’s still in a coma. We started having family lunches here, after they moved her to a different wing—that has her family’s name—Linda spends most of the time with her.

“Fuck no! I won’t have a quick wedding like Michael or Ollie,” I hiss at him.

“Yes, you will, Little Wasp, even if I have to carry you kicking and screaming to the City Hall,” he has the bloody courage to utter.

“They won’t let us merry Lori if you do that,” Gabe lets Bez know.

“Exactly, you fool! I want time to organize it. To choose my dress and have my bachelor party.”

Bez snorts. “Like I’ll let you have a bachelor party with naked strippers.”

I sniff, already planning one of my petty revenges as Gabe says, “Let’s talk about this later.”

We enter the room. Everybody is here but Sari—he spends more and more time in his lab these days. They’re already eating food from the takeaway containers. We might have arrived a tad late.

Meg looks the same, lying on the hospital bed. She has new white strands in her hair, but her skin is rosy and her face rested.

Nobody has spotted us since they’re talking tosh about me and my boyfriends—fiancés. I look down at my ring, and my heart makes a little cartwheel inside my chest.

“Maybe they are the same blood type,” Raph is saying, standing with Michael in his arms.

“Gabe can harvest his organs in time of need,” Uri says almost boredly, looking out of the window.

“C-3PO don’t need organs,” Rami states while eating his cherry and vanilla sundae, sitting near Hunter. “He probably wants to turn Lori into a robotic gremlin.”

“Like a mini Transformers?” Ollie asks from Rague’s lap as he grunts with amusement.

“You have more microchips under your skin than all of us together,” Linda comes to our defense. I think. The chips she is referring to are the ones that keep Rami in constant contact with Serena, his AI.

“I think Gabe-Pinocchio is evolving into a real boy. Haven’t you seen him smiling?” Hunter asks, stuffing his mouth with three dumplings.

“Once,” Rami lifts his index finger. “To Lori. Don’t know how Gremlin did it. Maybe he has some kind of Voodoo power.”

“If I did, you’d look like a strainer for all the needles I’d stab your doll with!” I snarl.

“Hey!” Linda leaves her chair near Meg’s bed to hug us. She isn’t angry we are late, which is not like her. What happened to Meg changed her. She’s

turned more tactile and cuddly. More silent. Her smiles are dimmed, but she tries to stay positive. We all do. “I’m so glad you’re here. Hungry?”

“The sausage fest has started without us.” I glare at the rest of them. “Are you dropping one in your boxers?” I ask Raph and his constipated-looking face.

“I don’t wear boxers.”

“Freeballing, naughty, naughty psycho Bully Boy,” I taunt him as I plop right down in Gabe’s lap. His long sexy fingers wrap around my waist, and he pulls me back against his chest as I grab the food container Linda hands me. His cock plumps up against my ass, and I wiggle against it. I can’t wait until we are alone again. My body is done for today, but snuggling on the sofa as we watch a movie is one of my favorite things about living with them.

We start eating, with me feeding Bez. The Chinese food is good and the jokes continue.

“Did you upgrade his software last night?” Rami asks me about Gabe.

“He upgraded mine repeatedly. Wink, wink.” He gags at my answer.

“We shouldn’t be here having fun,” Uri suddenly barks. “But out there looking for Phoenix!”

“We are doing that,” Rami replies. “Serena is looking non-stop.”

“We need to do more!”

“We stopped the drug from spreading in Chicago and took care of whoever was related to it,” Raph says.

“You need to be patient.” Sometimes Gabe can state the obvious.

“It’s not enough!” Uri yells.

“Meg wouldn’t want you to go crazy about it. She only ever wanted for you to feel happy,” Linda interjects with a calming tone.

“Well, she isn’t here. Not really,” Uri replies, turning his back to all of us.

“Oh, but she is. I see her in all of you. I see her strength in Gabe and her clarity of mind in Bez, her big, soft heart in Sari. Rami has her persistence, Raph her objective point of view, Rague her resolution, and Michael her empathy. And you, Uri, you have her quick thinking.” She stands up and places a hand on Uri’s shoulder. “I miss her too.”

“We all do,” Michael whispers. I glance at her lying still, pleading with her to open her eyes. Her *kids* need her. But she remains still, like a beautiful princess waiting for her true love’s kiss.

Uri nods and walks outside the room, sitting on one of the chairs in the corridor. Hands in his hair, elbows on his knees, looking...helpless. We put on a light front, but we all feel the same inside.

We eat in silence for a while until Ollie tells me, “I’m still waiting for you to say it.”

“Say what?” I pretend ignorance.

“Lor, say it, or I’ll sing to you.” That’s a real threat, Ollie’s singing voice is glass-cracking and shatteringly terrible.

I huff loudly. “You were right,” I grant him.

He raises his hands victoriously in the air. “God, it’s petty of me. But it felt so good.”

I smirk at him. “Right? Just like my fiancés’ cock a few hours ago after he proposed.” I raise my ring finger and show him the engagement ring.

“Fiancés?” Ollie repeats.

Rami gasps and then starts coughing, choking on his sundae’s cherry. Hunter slaps his back, and the weaponized fruit flies out of his mouth, hitting Ollie’s hand.

“Disgusting.” Ollie grabs a tissue to clean his skin.

I laugh, followed by Rague, Linda, and Michael. I can’t help it. I can’t stop, because that was fucking bonkers.

“It is funny when it happens to someone else.” Gabe raises his brow at Rami, who glowers at him.

“Tell your laptop to shut up!” His voice is raspy as he hisses at me. He accepts the water Hunter is handing him and keeps trying to turn us into ashes, glaring from the edge of his glass. There’s no real menace in it, though.

“We should use it in the FUNS room as a torture technique. Spitting cherries.” Michael chuckles at his own joke.

The congratulations arrive all at once. Linda and Michael ask about the ring, and Ollie even *awws* when I tell him about the three stones. So mushy!

“Pay up! Today is my day,” Rague suddenly says, and grumbling and muttering, everybody tosses money on the table.

“This family and their bets!” Michael shakes his head, hitting his husband with an elbow—since he betted as well and lost.

Did they have a pool on our engagement? Why didn’t they tell me? I would have bet and lost, never expected Gabe or Bez to propose ever.

I turn to Ollie. “Soooo, horrible bestie, will you be my maid of honor?”

“Maid of honor?” he repeats slowly.

“Best man, hit man...call it whatever you want.” I wave my hand in the air.

“I’d be honored and a bit scared. Your bridezilla craziness is going to be horrific.”

I flip him off and turn toward the door where Uri is hugging a very agitated Sari.

“Bet me,” I whisper in Gabe’s ear, pointing at Uri and Sari.

“What are the stakes?” he asks.

“They’ll be together by the end of the year. If I’m right, you’ll let us have casual Friday at work, with Mexican or Chinese food takeaways.”

“You’re always casual at work, and you already sent the email to everybody. They don’t like it.”

“No. They are scared shitless of you. So you need to assure them that it is fine!”

“If you’re wrong, you’ll stop your little revenges around the office. You’ll come to me, and we’ll find a solution.”

“You mean your go-to response: you’re fired!” I taunt him.

“We’ll also have you as our *submissive* slave for an entire week,” Bez replies.

Fuck! Having two fiancés has his pros and cons. But I’ll never lose. I have a plan.

I nod, and we shake hands, but he doesn’t let go of mine.

“You’ll do that thing with your tongue on my dick later,” Bez growls, biting my lips before giving me a breath-stealing kiss.

I’m crazy on the outside, they’re deranged on the inside. Somehow, we are perfect for each other.

Rami’s mocking voice reaches me. “Gabe is smiling again! Or is it gas? A stroke perhaps, lucky we are in a hospital. Grizzly, go fetch a doc.”

“She was poisoned!” Sari’s voice makes my head snap his way. “Meg! Somebody poisoned her.”

“What?”

“Who?”

“How?”

“Tells us what you found out,” Gabe tells him, as Michael goes to check a very pale Linda.

“The coma, the doctors couldn’t understand the cause of it. Her lupus was manageable. Then a week ago, Ferdinand started feeling dizzy, weak, he even fainted. That’s when I figured it out. A poison.”

“Are you sure?” Raph asks.

“What kind of poison?” Hunter this time.

“Cyanide compounds can be absorbed through the skin when in a liquid state.”

“A diagnosis is often difficult, but she has been suffering from a slow heart rate and low blood pressure and had some dizzy spells,” Michael says.

“She did? I didn’t know,” Raph snarls.

“She didn’t tell any of you because you’re overprotective fools!” Sari sends a glare to all his brothers.

“Where was the poison?” I ask.

“Her garden.”

“She doesn’t let anybody touch it.” Uri nods, an angry expression on his face.

“Not even me,” Linda whispers.

“Ferdinand has been taking care of it since she’s been here, and yesterday, he told me he was having the same symptoms.”

“Is Ferdinand okay?” Rague’s gruff voice has taken on an even lower register.

“Yes. Luckily, he exposed himself to the poison only for a short period. It was on the tools and even in the soil.”

“Who could have that kind of access to it? The house has the best security system: Serena,” Raph says.

“Serena, I want you to find anybody who has any connection with Meg’s garden or any of her tools, plants, the soil. Check everything, the house footage going back to... When?” Rami asks Sari, with a deep frown on his face.

“Seeing the high percentage of cyanide I found in the sample, around six months.”

Silence falls in the hospital bedroom. Then a scream filled with rage and anguish rises from Linda. Michael's sobs are silenced by Raph's chest as we are all enraged and shocked.

"She is a forensic psychiatrist. She must have a thousand people who want to kill her," Uri suggests.

"It has to be Phoenix. He's the only mastermind that could pull this off! Serena is impenetrable," Rami hisses.

"How about the guy with the white mask?" Ollie asks.

"It's not him," Uri states.

"He got to your house steps. Isn't your lake house impenetrable too?" Raph insists.

"And we know he's good at torturing. Bailey's physical condition proved that," I add.

"Leave it alone! It's not him!" Uri growls.

"How do you know?" Gabe questions Uri.

"What aren't you telling us?" Rague asks him.

"He's eight," Uri yells.

"Eight?" Is he...is he talking about the subject number the scientists gave them when they were imprisoned?

"There was no eight. Uri you were seven, the last one," Gabe confirms my thought.

"There was." He sighs.

"How do you know? Apart from me and Raph we were unaware of each other until we were found by Linda and Meg," Michael says.

A long silence envelopes the hospital room before Uri confesses, "Eight is my twin brother."

Bloody. Sodding. Hell.

THE END

OMG! Uri has a brother!? You know what that means, right?? To be continued....

Thanks

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afterword

Thank you all for continuing reading my crazy stories. Lori was a nutter and I enjoyed writing about him deeply. Never tell which kid is your fav... Lori is mine. Ooops!

I hope you liked the way Gabe/Bez and Lori end up together. It was a mad ride, with some revenge and blood and kinks, but those are the only stories I like to write about.

I'm so sorry about Meg. Writing Gabe's scene at the hospital and afterwards was really hard, it took me quite a while to finish it. Unfortunately Meg has to be in a coma for the story to continue...

This is not the end! I'm working on a crazy Christmassy novella from Lori's POV, he'll get himself in trouble of course bringing some of his friends down with him. In the same book there's going to be an extra short story, set in a university campus. Intrigued?

My Mafia Babes series is in the making, hopefully the first book in the series will be out in February. Then I'll keep going with the Angels of Wrath again. Don't worry I'll finish the series and start a couple of spin-offs from there—the triplets need lurve as well.

Thank you to my editor and beta readers for the outstanding work they always do. Couldn't do it without your expert minds.

To my proofreader for her incredible kindness and patience.

I really hope you'll research about multiplicity. There are so many wonderful people with this condition in the world that live happily having more than one identity sharing their body with.

To the ones who are still struggling with it or DID. Be patient. You're extraordinary. Unique. Take a day at a time. If you need help, there're many skilled psychiatrists who can give it to you or people in your same condition.

Don't give up.

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about the author

I can't remember a time when I wasn't reading a book. Whether it was sci-fi, romance or a detective story didn't matter, because it was the perfect way to escape from reality for a little while.

When I wasn't reading, I was imagining my own stories, and after a while I started writing them, hoping to give other people that little escape I still enjoy so much.

My books are full of dark humor, spicy, kinky scenes, possessive, obsessed, protective MCs and always happy endings.

I live in Japan with my two kids and my stinky, super cute Frenchie.



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